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APPEALS TO THE HEART;

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EXHIBITING THE

BEAUTIES, OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH.

IN

Twenty-one Discourses,

PRACTICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL.

BY THOMAS SPENCER,

Pastor of a Church in Liverpool, England.

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY JAMES LORING,

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE Rev. Thomas Spencer was born at Hertford, January 21, 1791. Even when a child, preachers and preaching seemed to occupy nearly all his thoughts. The manuscript of a sermon, written when he was about twelve years old, is still preserved, which shows the early bias of his mind, and indicates his future superiority.

In 1806, when he was about fifteen, he was placed by Thomas Wilson, Esq. under the care of the Rev. William Hordle, of Harwich, to enter on his preparatory studies. In January, 1807, when he was sixteen, he was admitted into Hoxton College. During the vacation in the following Midsummer, he preached his first sermon in public, at Collier's-End, a small village near Hertford. This sermon is the first in the present volume, and was preached July the 5th, 1807: the two following sermons were also delivered in the same month. The dates affixed to the ensuing discourses, will show Mr. Spencer's age when they were preached.

In the Midsummer vacation of 1810, he was appointed to preach to a congregation at Liverpool. His sermons excited extraordinary attention, and he was invited to the pastoral office.

On Sunday, the 3d of February, 1811, Mr. Spencer commenced his stated engagements at Liverpool, just after he had attained his twentieth year. His preaching attracted such overflowing congregations, that in a few months it was found absolutely necessary to erect a much larger chapel, of which he laid the first stone on the 15th of April, 1811, and in which the Rev. Dr. Raffles now successfully labors. But it pleased Him whose designs are inscrutable to man, though always wise and good in themselves, to cut short the days of this most promising and devoted young minister, after he had been settled

about six months at Liverpool. On Monday morning August the 5th, he resolved to bathe in the river Mersey, thinking it might brace his nerves after the exertions of the preceding Sabbath, and prepare him for the duties to which he intended to devote the day. He had folded his paper and prepared his pen, in order to compose a sermon to be preached in the ensuing week on behalf of the Religious Tract Society, of whose Anniversary Meeting, held in May, 1811, he had received from his friend, Mr. John Haddon, a particular account, with copies of the addresses then delivered, which had determined him to advocate the cause of this Institution.\* Mr. Spencer left his paper and pen prepared for this purpose, and proceeded to the river, but soon after he had entered it, he was borne out by the current, sunk in the deep water, and was drowned. Thus suddenly was he called from his early labors on earth to an eternal reward in heaven.

As these Sermons will probably be read by many who are engaged in, or preparing for the Christian ministry, the following additional observation is especially deserving of their attention: "It was invariably from communion with God in the closet, that Spencer passed to what he described as 'that awful place,—a pulpit.' Those who heard him, will not easily forget the devotional simplicity and fervor of soul which he manifested when proclaiming the glories of the Redeemer, and the sparkling of his eye while pronouncing that adorable name to which 'every knee shall bow.'"

It is necessary to state, that Mr. Spencer, when preaching, did not confine himself to what he had written; but he made frequent enlargements, especially at the close, and in the application of his sermons.

\* Mr. John Haddon presented these Sermons to the Religious Tract Society of London, and as a testimony of their high approbation, they were published by that Society in a neat volume.

# DISCOURSE I.

*ATONING EFFICACY IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST.*

PREACHED JULY 5, 1807.\*

---

"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."  
1 JOHN I. 7.

It has been the characteristic of really faithful ministers of the gospel, in every age, to speak of those blessed truths, the power of which they have felt in their own souls. This was the case with the apostles : they one and all declared the power of that Divine grace which had melted their frozen hearts, enlightened their dark understandings, and renewed their stubborn wills. We see this in the first verse of the chapter from which we have read a text ; in which the apostle says, " That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled

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\* " At the vacation in June he returned to his father's house at Hertford. During his stay there, he preached his first sermon in public. It was at the small village of Collier's End, six miles from Hertford. His auditory consisted of about thirty plain country people, and his text was 1 John, chap. I. ver. 7, ' The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' Simple and unlettered, however, as his audience might be, they had sufficient penetration to discover the uncommon talents of their youthful preacher. These, together with the novelty and loveliness of his juvenile appearance, excited in that little village an astonishment and admiration, which have since circulated through all the districts of the great metropolis, and almost every town in Great Britain."—*Extract from Dr. Raffles's Memoir of the Rev. T. Spencer.*

of the word of life ;"—“ that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.” Thus he puts the saints in mind of the gospel he had written, in which he declared to them that “ Word of life” who had been with the Father, and was manifested to the world ; and whom he now declares again unto them, that they might have fellowship with him, and all the true apostles ; assuring them, for a motive, that their fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The fellowship of the saints is with the Father, as the source and spring of eternal life and happiness ; and with the Son, as Mediator, who has opened the way, removed every obstacle, and given them an access by one Spirit unto the Father.

The design of the apostle in writing these things was, that their joy might be full. It was his earnest prayer, as well as the prayer of the apostle Paul, that the God of hope would fill them with all joy and peace in believing. He excites them to preserve fellowship and communion with God, by considering the transcendent excellence of the Divine nature ; “ God,” says he, “ is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” How clear is his knowledge, for He is omniscient ; and how unstained is His nature, for God is holy.

Our conduct then is most evil, if while we pretend to holy communion with God, we walk in darkness. For there can be no communion between purity and impurity, heaven and hell, God and the devil. God hath fellowship with saints in affection and delight ; they have fellowship with him in salvation and happiness. He gives himself and all he possesses to them, and they are enabled to give themselves to him. He bestows grace and pardon on us, and we resign our hearts and our all to

him. But in order to our doing this, some important change must take place in us ; for by nature we are averse to God, prone to wander from him, and have the greatest enmity to him ; yet there is a way by which man can be brought nigh unto God, have his natural enmity subdued, and be reconciled unto the Father of spirits. Therefore, lest any should be excited to despair, by a view of the enormity of their crimes, let them hear the consoling language of our text : " The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." When once our sins are pardoned by the blood of Jesus, we are admitted into communion with God, and with his Son. Oh that our meditations on this passage may be profitable !

You will observe, that these words speak of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the atonement of the Saviour ; and we may consider them, as pointing out its *value*—as declaring its *continual efficacy*—and, as asserting its *universal influence*. Let us view the text,

I. As pointing out its *value*.

It declares the way of pardon to be by the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. By the blood of Jesus, in our text, we are to understand the last sufferings and the death of the Saviour. This blood is the ransom of our souls, the price of our redemption, and the expiation of our sin. This was the highest and most excellent part of his obedience. " Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

His whole life was a scene of suffering, but his death completed his obedience ; in that he manifested the greatest love to God his Father, and men, his people. The expiatory sacrifices under

the law were always bloody : death was to be endured for sin, and blood was the life of the creature ; so the blood, the death of Christ, is the cause of our life, justification, sanctification, and glorification. The value of this sacrifice is infinite ; and its value is plainly pointed out in the passage before us. It is the blood of Him whose name is Jesus ; a name which is above every name ; a name which is as ointment poured forth ; and a name which causeth those who know it to be joyful in Him that bears it. It is a name at which every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. It is a wonderful, glorious, ineffable, and unspeakable name. The title by which the Saviour is distinguished, stamps the greatest dignity on his sacrifice, and confirms its value. The blood mentioned in the text is the blood of a Saviour, as the name imports. It is the blood of one appointed and commissioned to save his people from the guilt, the power, the practice, and the love of sin. He rescues their souls from the power of Satan ; and, having delivered them from all their vain expectations and false refuges, he saves them from the curse of the law ; to them there is now no condemnation, because they are in Christ, by a living faith and vital union.

Jesus is a Saviour, because he finally delivers all his people from sinking into the pit of hell, being himself their ransom ; and the blood of which we speak, is the blood of one who has almighty power to save, even to the very uttermost, all that come unto God by him ; and he has a full commission from God the Father to execute his eternal purposes of love to men, in saving them with an everlasting salvation : hence he is called Christ, having been

anointed by the Father for this express purpose. The blood of which we speak is infinitely valuable, because it was shed by the Christ of God. Of him it is said, "Grace is poured into thy lips; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;"—for him hath God the Father sealed. He himself said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me." The priests, under the Mosaic dispensation, were anointed; see Lev. iv. 3, Numb. iii. 3; besides many other passages. Now Jesus is the Anointed of the Lord; the Spirit was poured upon him without measure. Hence, when we pray for acceptance with the Father, we say with the Psalmist, "Look upon the face of thine Anointed." This anointing eminently qualifies him for the important office of a Saviour to his people. And must not that sacrifice be exceedingly valuable, which was made by the Christ of God? Must not that blood be precious, which was shed by the Lord's Anointed? The text then evidently points out its value, when it calls it the blood of Jesus Christ. It would be well for us, if our consciences were more and more assured of our interest in the salvation of Jesus Christ; then with what deep humility, unfeigned gratitude, and joyful praise, should we contemplate the subject!

Jesus is the Son of God, therefore his atonement is infinite; and, consequently, unspeakably valuable. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, that cleanseth us from all sin. It is true that this blood was the blood of Christ's humanity, yet the merit of it was derived from his Divinity. It was not his blood, as the Son of the virgin, which is the means of salvation, but his blood as he was the Son of God. We need not

wonder, then, that it has efficacy sufficient to cleanse believers in all ages of the world from their vast load of guilt, when we recollect that it is the blood of Christ, who is God over all, blessed for evermore. Oh ! how infinitely valuable does the sacrifice of Christ appear, on account of the Divinity of his person ! Let us all then highly value the atonement, the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus ; for his was the blood of the Son of God.

What a privilege it is to belong to that church which he has purchased with his own invaluable blood ! Our faith is precious, inasmuch as it lays hold on the atonement of a precious Saviour, who shed his invaluable blood for sinners of the human race. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, which cancels the debt we all owe to God, which is the way by which we are delivered from condemnation, which insures our pardon, and by virtue of which we arrive at glory.

Having considered the text, as pointing out the infinite value of the blood of Christ, we hold it up to your view,

## II. As declaring its *continual efficacy*.

The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin ; it has a cleansing quality. And here it is evidently implied, that man by nature is defiled, is brought into such a state as to need cleansing ; and who can doubt this solemn truth ?—who, that studies his own heart, makes daily observations on mankind, reads the page of history, and peruses the sacred volume ? There is not one who does these things, but will confess that man is by nature defiled. Sin is of a defiling nature, and it renders the subject of it impure in the sight of a holy God, who can never look upon sin with the least degree of approbation. It makes a man dis-



gusting to angels and glorified spirits, the abhorrence of good men, and the fit companion for devils. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. So none but God can new-create the soul. All men by nature are defiled with sin; they come into the world polluted, and soon, by a long list of actual crimes, they render themselves more obnoxious to Divine justice, and expose themselves to eternal wrath. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, there is nothing but wounds, bruises, and putrifying sores. Sin has completely ruined us; made us defiled in every power and faculty of the soul, and left us without God, and without hope in the world.

Oh! what great reason have we all to lament the polluted state of man, and to use the prayer of the Psalmist, saying, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me!" Or to say, in other words, "Lead us to the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son, which cleanseth us from all sin." Blessed be God, there was a day when "this fountain was opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." But here we would observe, that the blood of Christ does not perfectly cleanse us from the sense of sin: the sparks of the fiery law will flash in our consciences; very often the smiles of God's countenance seemed changed into frowns; Satan accuses, and conscience knows not how to answer. Unbelief very often starts in the mind of the believer, and he distrusts the Lord that bought him; but, however, the blood of Christ shall never lose its cleansing virtue, it shall be perfect in its effects; it has rent the vail between God and us, and it will rend that vail which is between us and conscience. The soul of a christian shall

be, ere long, presented before the throne of God, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Nor does the blood of Jesus entirely remove the risings of sin. The mind of a good man continues to be vexed, not only with abominations without, but corruptions within. We are not freed from the remains of sin, whatever some men may talk about perfection. Paul knew nothing of it, when he said, "Oh! wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We may see an end of all perfection, if we are led into the wickedness of our hearts, and the spirituality of the Divine law: nevertheless, the blood of Christ will, in some future period, remove every stain, and make us holy as God is holy. It shall perfect what it has begun. The soul of a child of God shall be made pure as snow, and white as wool. Although the blood of Christ does not yet cleanse from the sense nor the risings of sin, yet, adored be the name of Jesus, it removes the condemnation of sin, it frees us from its punishment. Although the nature of sin does not cease to be sinful, yet the power of it ceases to be condemning. Sin is not imputed to them that believe; and where the crime is not imputed, the punishment cannot be inflicted. Jesus having suffered, justice is satisfied, and God can demand no more. The cause and effect of Almighty vengeance are removed, as it respect those that believe, by the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ cleanseth them from sin. The pardon of sin properly consists in a remission of its punishment. It would be contrary both to the mercy and justice of God to punish a man who had been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Contrary to his justice, for he has accepted the sacrifice made by Christ, who paid the debt and acquitted the

criminal, when he bare our sins in his own body on the tree : contrary to his mercy, because it would be cruelty to adjudge a person to punishment who had been legally acquitted, and made innocent by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. The believer, then, being freed from the charge of the law, is no longer obnoxious to its curse, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. An accusing conscience, a violated law, a hostile world, and the enemy Satan, may bring their sentences of condemnation on others, but they cannot condemn believers ; for there is nothing left that shall condemn them for sin, because Christ by his own sacrifice has condemned sin in the flesh. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin. The cleansing efficacy of this blood shall be made manifest before an assembled world. Believers shall then be collected out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, to have their purification made known to all the world. That will be a time of refreshing indeed ; sin shall no longer distress, conscience no more reproach, and God no more correct. In the present life there is a secret grant of pardon to the believer, but then there shall be a solemn publication of it before men and angels. Christ will pronounce all his children righteous, and present them unblameable, and without spot, to God his Father.

When the apostle says, " The blood of Christ cleanseth," it evidently implies that his blood is the only means of obtaining pardon. He joins nothing with it. As it possesses the sole, the sovereign virtue of cleansing from iniquity, in vain do men expect pardon from mere mercy, from the intercession of saints, or from any righteousness of

their own. None of these things can cleanse from sin. The types and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation could never make the comers thereunto perfect, holy, or clean. They only prefigured the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the only way of pardon. Salvation is of grace from first to last, and you may depend upon it there is no fountain that can cleanse from sin but the blood of Christ; for it is that which cleanseth from all sin: and this blood cleanseth perfectly, removes every stain. The blood of the Redeemer being shed for his people, God looks on his church, and says, "Thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee."

Thus does this text declare the efficacy of Jesus' blood.

Let us consider that this efficacy is perpetual, is continual. For it is said, "it cleanseth;" not, it hath cleansed, or shall cleanse at some future period, but it now cleanseth. And this may always be said of this precious blood, for it shall never lose its power, till every elect vessel is gathered in, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. There is a continued cleansing act; Jesus perpetually pleads it for us, and it constantly flows unto us. There is a stream of corruption always in our nature, so there is a constant flow of cleansing blood. It is a fountain now standing open for sin and for uncleanness. It was shed but once. It is often applied; and its virtue will be felt to all eternity. The blood of Jesus is never lost or congealed, like the blood of the legal sacrifices. It is, as a good writer observes, "as new and fresh for the work it was appointed to, as when it was shed upon the cross; as full of vigor, as if it had been shed but this moment." The justification of a believer before God, stands upon as certain

ground as the justification of Christ himself before God. He was accepted, because he shed his blood ; and we are accepted, because we are cleansed by it. And the meritorious plea of this blood continuing for ever, is not without the perpetual act of the righteous Judge, justifying those for whom it pleads.

Hence will follow our security at the last judgment. As Christ's blood now cleanseth from sin, so his voice shall then absolve, completely absolve us from sin. Those poor sinners who are alarmed, as it respects their state, need not fear that the blood of Christ has lost its efficacy ; for it continues to cleanse, and so it shall continue, whilst one elect character remains on the earth to be directed by the Divine Spirit unto it for salvation. And after that, when all good men shall be safe in glory, every tongue shall be employed in adoring that sovereign grace which directed them to this all-cleansing fountain. Since we contract guilt every day, this medicine can daily be applied. The pleas of this blood are renewed according to the necessity of our persons. Every time an Israelite was bitten by a fiery serpent, he must look up to the brazen serpent for cure ; so we, upon every sting of conscience, must look up to Him who was raised on the cross as our remedy. Since the fountain is open every day, and we contract guilt every day, let not a day pass without fresh applications of this blood upon any defects in our walking with him, since the blood of Jesus Christ continues to cleanse us from all sin.

But not only does our text denote the continual efficacy of the blood of Christ, but we would contemplate it,

III. As asserting its *universal influence*.

It cleanseth, not all persons, but from all sin. Since it was the blood of so great a person as the Son of God, it is as powerful to cleanse us from the greatest sin as from the least. It is a universal remedy. It absolves from the guilt of sin, and shelters from the wrath of God. The nature of our sins, and the defilement of them, are not regarded when this invaluable blood is set in opposition to them. Jesus was delivered for our offences, not for some few of our offences, but for all ; therefore his blood cleanseth from them all : from all original transgression, and actual sin ; from the guilt incurred, by omitting the good which God has commanded, and the commission of that evil which he has prohibited. God has laid on his Son Jesus the iniquity of us all : the sins of all believers, in all parts, in all ages of the world ; from the first moment that Adam sinned, to the time when the last sin shall be committed. As all the sins of the people were laid upon the head of the scapegoat, to be carried by him into the wilderness, so are all our sins pardoned and forgiven by the blood of Jesus. The greatest wickedness that was ever committed by men, was the murder of the Son of God ; whom they took, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain : yet, to the very persons who did this, pardon was offered. The gospel was preached, "beginning at Jerusalem." Herein we behold an evidence of the inestimable value of this blood, and of its inexhaustible virtue. Oh ! well might the apostle say, "It cleanseth from all sin." Do we come into the world obnoxious to the Divine vengeance, and hateful in the sight God ? Is the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to us ? It is. Yet the atonement of Jesus extends to original pollution. Although born in sin, and conceived

in iniquity, if he purge us with hyssop, we shall be clean ; if he wash us, we shall be whiter than snow. Have we omitted the performance of his holy law, and withheld that reverence which he so justly demands from us ? We have. But the blood of Jesus makes full atonement for this ; he has done more for us than we could have done for ourselves, had we a whole eternity to work out our own salvation. His blood cleanseth us from sin ; it removes all that guilt which is upon our consciences, for our not keeping the law of God. Although we have left undone the things which we ought to have done, yet Jesus hath done all things well. Again : by the atonement of Jesus, every actual sin is done away ; for his blood cleanseth from all sin. We have sinned in thought, word, and deed. Our sins are heinous and numerous ; yet they shall never be laid to our charge, if we are believers in Jesus. Should their number exceed the number of the luminaries that gild the arch of heaven, or of the particles of sand on the seashore, yet this precious blood removes the guilt of them from our consciences, their pollution from our hearts, the love of them from our minds, and, shall we add, the practice of them from our lives. Have we sinned in public ? If we are believers on the Son of God, it shall be publicly declared at the last day, that God has pardoned all our sins. Have we offended him in secret ? Alas ! we have, in ten thousand instances. His spirit shall secretly bear us witness then, that our sins are all forgiven. Let every believer unite in ascribing praise to Him—because he would love. Let each of us say—

“ Oh ! to grace, how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrain'd to be !  
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering soul to thee.”

From what has been said, we learn the infinite evil of sin, which required such a sacrifice as Jesus Christ; and should we not then detest it, and flee from it, as from the face of a serpent? Let us beware of sacrificing the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame, by our guilt and crimes. If there were nothing else to teach us the evil and damnable nature of sin, the blood of Christ loudly proclaims it. Let us not, then, attempt to excuse our sins; but whilst we are blessing God for the remedy, let us, as long as we live, lament over the disease. Sin must be hateful in the view of every good man; and, depend upon it, that that system of religion which allows sin, in any shape whatever, is a diabolical system; it is from Satan, and not from God; for he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with the least degree of approbation.

Need I say, that we learn from this subject the folly of self-righteous men, who attempt to find salvation apart from Christ? Remember, that nothing but the blood of Jesus is sufficient to atone for the sins of men. All your legal performances amount to just nothing at all, as it respects obtaining your salvation. Why will you not submit to the righteousness of God? Flee, sinners, to the Saviour's blood; wash there, and be clean; so shall you be made eternally happy, and shall be brought to join all the blood-bought race of ransomed sinners, in ascriptions of eternal praise to God and the Lamb for ever. Then shall this triumphant language be the burden of your song: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."



## DISCOURSE II.

*ALL MEN ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD.*

PREACHED AT COLLIER'S END, OUT OF DOORS,  
JULY 19, 1807.

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"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."  
ROMANS XIV. 12.

THESE words were first addressed to the Romans by the apostle Paul : they spoke loudly to them, and bid them prepare for their final judgment. And are they of no importance to us, "on whom the ends of the world are come?" Do they demand no serious attention from us? Ought they not to lessen our attachment to present things, and inspire us with holy boldness and resolution in the cause of God our Saviour? They represent the great Eternal as our Judge, and we all, every one of us, giving an account of ourselves to him. And if the Judge is at the door, how careful should we be to live, not to ourselves; but whether we live, we should live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we should die unto the Lord; so that whether living or dying, we may be the Lord's. "For to this end," says the apostle, "Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." Why then should we judge one another? "for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." For it is written; "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee

shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Oh, let the artful hypocrite, the openly profane, and the real believer, hear the solemn language of the text. It is language that concerns them all, and demands from every one of us earnest attention, close examination, and fervent prayer. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." For a few moments, then, let us lay aside every other concern, and attend to this most important subject. From the text we shall make two plain observations :—

I. That at the general judgment, we must give an account of ourselves.

II. That this account will be rendered to God.

Oh that the Holy Spirit would impress the subject on all our minds, and cause our meditations to be very profitable to all our souls ! Observe, then,

I. That at the general judgment we shall give an account of ourselves.

It is a subject which concerns us all, for it is said in the text, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice." "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ;" that is, persons of all ages, states, and degrees of men, will have to make their appearance before the great white throne. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it and death and hell (that is, earth and the grave) shall give up the dead that are in them ; and they shall all be judged, every man according to his works, even from the king on the throne to the beggar on the dunghill. Then shall the rich and the poor meet together, the Lord shall be the Judge of them both : there will be no distinction made on account of former riches or poverty. Both the man of property and

wealth, and he who in the sweat of his brow did eat bread, shall be judged at one tribunal. The man of learning and study will receive his sentence at the same tribunal, and from the same tremendous Judge, as the ignorant and illiterate man, who has neither opportunities to be wise, nor desire to be learned. All the various classes of men will stand before God on that solemn day. Then will the minister who labored, toiled, and spent himself in the service of God, give up his account. Being raised from the long sleep of death, with holy serenity and joyful triumph on his countenance, he approaches the Judge of all the earth, and, accompanied with those who were called by his ministry, he exclaims, "Here am I, Father, and the children whom thou hast given me. Thou knowest that I aimed not at the great things of the world, though I was thankful for those conveniences which thou gavest me; I preached not to display learning or to acquire human applause, but, being washed in Jesus' blood myself, I longed to direct others to that blessed fountain: I preached in compassion to souls, and with an earnest desire to please and honor thee." Then shall the Judge say to this faithful laborer, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

There also shall appear the time-serving loiterer in the vineyard of the Lord; and, oh! what a dreadful sentence will be passed on that unhappy man, who never faithfully warned of sin, or of approaching danger! Many will rise up and accuse him in that day, because he did not warn them to flee from the wrath to come. Oh! in what unutterable anguish will he behold the Searcher of all hearts, and the Trier of the reins of the children of men, who will punish sinners with ev-

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power! All that have believed through grace, and fled for refuge to Jesus, shall receive their acquittal before an assembled world. All whom everlasting love elected, sovereign mercy redeemed, and sanctifying grace made holy, shall hear their Judge saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And every worker of iniquity, every enemy of the cross of Christ, shall then meet this Judge. And, oh! awful will be his sentence! Words cannot express the terror, the horror, the despair which shall pervade his soul, when that God, whose word, ways, and people, he despised, shall say to him, "Depart from me, thou cursed, into everlasting burning, prepared for the devil and his angels." Awful as this sentence is, it will be executed to its utmost extent, and the unhappy lost soul will to all eternity experience the weight of Almighty vengeance. In a word, our text says, "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Every one that has ever lived on this earth; every one that now inhabits it; every hearer of the gospel; every husband, wife, and child; every professor of religion; every enemy to God. Every one in this assembly will give up his account. All that the fire has consumed, that the sea has contained, or that the earth has inclosed, shall hear the trumpet sound, and awake, either to everlasting life, or to eternal shame and confusion. The part allotted to us, our text informs us, will be to give an account of ourselves: we shall give an account of the talents which we possess—the mercies which we enjoy—the judgments which we have abused—and the actions which we performed.

1. We shall give an account of the *talents* which we possess.

Our Lord represents our giving an account of the talents with which we are intrusted, by a parable in Luke xix. 11—27. By this parable, he reminds us of that awful reckoning to which we shall be called, and which is mentioned in our text. He therein shows us, that it will be in vain for us to approach the Lord of heaven and earth, saying, “Lord, behold here is thy pound, which I have kept, laid up in a napkin.” For why does God give men natural talents and abilities, but that they may improve them to his glory? There have been many, who have been blessed with capacious minds and great abilities, who have prostituted their talents to the vilest of purposes; these persons will all be summoned before the great tribunal, to give an account of themselves to God, and will undoubtedly hear their tremendous Judge saying, “Those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.” And those to whom God gave but moderate talents, who yet improved them, and spent all their lives in that service which is perfect freedom, namely, the service of God, those persons shall be honorably acquitted; and having been faithful in that which is little, shall be instantly received into the joy of their Lord.

Oh, let us never forget that we shall be called to give an account of our stewardship, and that we shall either be hailed to eternal glory, or banished to unutterable despair. Let us employ the abilities God has given us in the best of causes, in promoting the honor and glory of God our Saviour, by telling to all around us the unsearchable riches of Divine grace, that they may be encouraged to

apply to the Friend of sinners, and find in him all that salvation which they need.

2. We must give an account of the *mercies* which we enjoy.

For what has God given us our time, but that we may catch the fleeting moments, and spend them all in wisdom's ways? Soon there shall be time no longer. Oh, then, let us not waste it, but redeem it, because the days are evil; so shall time bear us away to a happy eternity. But, oh, what an awful reckoning will those have to give, who employ every art to kill time! We are favored with innumerable blessings of a temporal nature, of which we must give an account. God has given them to us, that they may lead us to repentance; and happy will it be for us if they produce that desirable effect. And why does the trumpet of the gospel salute our ears with glad tidings of great joy? Oh, for how much more shall we have to answer than those who have never heard or known the joyful sound! Great is the company of those who preach the gospel of the Son of God; from time to time we hear them delivering their message; and for every sermon that we have heard, we must give an account. One Sabbath succeeds another, and one opportunity for meeting with the saints follows another; and for all these things we must give an account. In short, every mercy with which we are favored, whether temporal or spiritual, will pass before our eyes, and demand of us how we have improved it. Oh, for grace to keep this awful account in mind, that so we may highly esteem our privileges, and see to it, that we not only duly estimate, but properly use, the mercies we enjoy, seeing the time is approaching when we shall enjoy them no more forever.

3. We shall give an account of the *judgments* we neglect.

Sinners are often reprov'd, yet, nevertheless, they harden their necks, and will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. How often does God display the terror of his frown to a nation by awful calamities, such as war, famine, or pestilence. He says to them, in these judgments, when he beholds their iniquity, "Shall I not visit for these things? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Yet, though his hand is awfully lifted up, they will not see. But let the people of such a nation recollect, that they must give an account of that contempt with which they have treated national visitations. How often does God make irreparable breaches in families! Visiting them for impiety, he removes a darling son, a beloved daughter, a tender parent, an affectionate husband, or a much-loved wife, with a stroke! And yet, after all this, they are numbered with the families that call not upon his name. There is nothing short of efficacious grace that can cause the inhabitants of the world to learn righteousness. Oh that the arm of the Lord might be revealed, in convincing men of sin, and fore-warning them of the account they will shortly have to give of the little success attendant either on the mercies or judgments of God! And has not God already spoken to us by the loud voice of an awakened conscience? Have we never been exercised with personal trials, difficulties, or conflicts? Have we never known what it is to feel alarm in our own souls, and dreadful forebodings of the day of judgment? If we are not awakened by these evils to a sense of duty, our condemnation will be increased by them: for, for all these things we must give an account.

4. The righteous Judge will inquire into the *actions* which we performed.

“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.” The penetrating eyes of God will notice the motives from which our actions spring. Probably we have done numerous actions, well enough, in themselves considered, but which are rendered impious and unholy by the desires from which they sprung. All this shall be laid open before an assembly of angels, devils, and men. And for every idle word that men speak, they must give an account. Oh that, before we shall be called to this tribunal, we may have our persons and services washed in the precious fountain of Immanuel’s blood ! Then the terrors of Sinai’s fiery law will not molest us ; nor will any one vial of Divine wrath be poured out upon us. Then God will look on us, and be well pleased for his righteousness’ sake. They that have done good, shall rise to eternal life ; and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. There is not even a wicked thought that will escape the notice of his eye, but they will be unto him like destruction, which is open before him, or hell, which is without a covering. Every thing will be noticed by God, the Judge of all, before whom we must all appear.

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” Oh that our account may be delivered with joy, and not with trembling ; that a happy entrance may be administered to us, into his eternal kingdom and glory !

Having thus endeavored to show that, at the general judgment, we shall give an account of ourselves, we proceed to remark :



II. That this account will be rendered to God :  
 " We must give account of ourselves to God."

In the fifth chapter of the Evangelist John, and the twenty-second verse, it is said, " The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son ;" and again, in the twenty-seventh verse, he " hath given him (that is, Christ) authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." These passages seem to prove that God the Father will not appear as Judge, but God the Son, that is, Christ, in his now glorified state. And there are many other passages which confirm this idea, such as these : " The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and before him shall be gathered all nations," &c. " Behold, he," namely, Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, who loved us, &c., " cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." And that this was the apostle's idea, is clearly deducible from the 10th verse of the chapter before us ; at the close of which he says, " For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." He uses similar language in the second epistle to the Corinthians, the fifth chapter and 10th verse, where he says, " We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ." The apostle, in the text, says, " So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Now can any one deny that this proves the Deity of Jesus Christ ? It is said, that God shall judge the world, and that act is ascribed to Jesus Christ, which plainly demonstrates that he is " God over all, blessed forever." The Godhead of Christ is the triumph of the Christian, who can look up to him, and with filial fear, ming-

led with holy boldness, can exclaim, "My God!" And those who now deny that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, will, in the day of judgment, have sufficient evidence of his Deity. He will appear, in all the uncreated glories of his Godhead, to banish all his enemies to the gulf of perdition, the lake of fire and brimstone, whence the smoke of their torment will ascend up forever and ever. Yes, they who now oppose the reign of Jesus, will then have to give up their account to him. All men shall appear before him, and he will give to every one according to his works.

We shall now observe, that our giving up our account to God, will heighten the solemnity of the scene; secure the impartiality of the sentence; and display the power and authority of the Judge.

1. It will heighten the solemnity of the scene.

It will be an awful thing to hear the sound of the angel's trumpet; to behold the elements melting with fervent heat; to see the graves opening, and the race of Adam shaking off the sleep of thousands of years; to hear the doleful shrieks of souls lost forever. Oh! it will be a dreadful sight to see unhappy thousands, standing at the left hand of the Judge, to be cast into the lake of hell, which already yawns to receive its new possessors! But, when we recollect that God himself is the Judge; that He who made heaven and earth, and is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders," is to decide on the final state of every man, we are filled with solemnity and dread. Those who now treat the doctrine of a resurrection and future judgment with unconcern, nay, with contempt, who laugh away gloomy thoughts of an awful eternity, will then be serious in reality, when they behold God, the Judge of all. For

they must give an account of themselves unto God. Oh ! what a solemn thought ! to a God who knows all hearts, and has declared that he will by no means clear the guilty ! Oh that we could always feel the import of the solemn words of the text ! for it will be an awful thing, a fearful thing, to fall into the hands of the living God. Not only will our rendering our account to the God-Man Jesus, heighten the solemnity of the scene, but it will also,

2. Secure the impartiality of the sentence.

That a sentence, final and irrevocable, will be passed on the actions of men in the last great day, is clear from the assertions of Scripture. If our fellow-mortals had to pass this sentence, it might be adjudged with partial hands ; but we have to adore God, that this sentence will not be passed, either by men, devils, or angels, but by God himself ; for,

He deals to all the due reward,  
Or by the sceptre, or the sword.

He only knows what an infinite evil sin is, and therefore he only can be the Judge to pass a final sentence on the bold transgressor. The excuses which men bring to their fellow-mortals, will avail nothing before the judgment-seat of Christ ; and we may all rest assured, that God will acquit none in that awful day, but those who are clothed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. How disappointed will those persons be, who are merely resting on the possibility of their doing as well as others ! they should know that none will do well, but those who have fled for refuge to Jesus, the Saviour of sinners. Oh that mankind would recollect that they must give an account of

themselves to God, and that this sentence on their actions will be impartial ; for he will not look on sin with the least degree of approbation, but will assuredly bid every worker of iniquity depart from his presence into the lake of fire and brimstone. We must appear before an impartial Judge.

3. Our giving up our account to God will display the power and authority of the Judge.

We have remarked before, that all power and judgment is committed unto the Son ; and in that day he will display the arm of his power ; his authority shall be displayed, in sending his angels to rouse the dead, in calling them all to his bar, in giving them a sentence of impartiality and justice, in banishing ungodly sinners to remediless woe, and in receiving his favorites to the kingdom of eternal glory. And this power, majesty, and authority, will be displayed before the whole company of angels and glorified spirits ; the race of man, from the first that was created to the last that died ; and the host of wicked angels, and condemned souls. Before all these, our Jesus will display his eternal power and Godhead, to the glorification of all his attributes and perfections ; the justifying all his dealings ; and the final happiness or complete and eternal misery of every individual. " Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Remember, that he who will be your Judge is almighty ; that his power is uncontrolled, and that the weight of his vengeance will be intolerable. Every one of you must give an account of yourselves to God. Oh that his grace and mercy may be manifested, in welcoming us to everlasting happiness, instead of his vengeance being displayed, in banishing us from his presence, and from the glory of his power.

This awful subject is calculated to alarm the sinner, comfort the believer, and instruct us all. When the apostle Paul reasoned of judgment to come, Felix trembled. And does not this subject, O sinner, affect thee? Can you be stupid and unaffected when you hear of the account you must shortly give? Those who at that awful day are found Christless, will also be speechless, hopeless, and helpless! How will their heads hang down, and their knees knock together! Oh, what pale faces, quivering lips, and fainting hearts! Oh, dreadful day! when the earth shall be trembling, the stars falling, the trumpet sounding, the dead rising, the elements melting, and the world on fire! Recollect the solemn tribunal before which you must appear, the impartial sentence you will receive, and the happiness or misery which will be your portion. What kind of account will you have to give of your talents, your time, or any thing with which you have been favored? Oh that this subject might be properly impressed on your hearts and consciences, then you would never trifle with solemn things! You would be often examining yourselves, that you might know whether you had a good hope through grace. Remember that you have been warned of approaching danger, and of appointed death and judgment. Say not, with many of old, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." There are sufficient proofs from reason and revelation, that there will be a judgment-day; and woe be unto those who are not anxiously concerned about the decision of their state on that important day.

We said that the subject was calculated to comfort the believer. The second advent of Christ is

to the christian a desirable event : he loves his appearing, and says, " Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." At that day, when he shall give an account of himself unto God, all his woes will be redressed. No longer shall he have to mourn over a body of sin and death. No more shall he cry out, Deliver me from temptation. All his sorrows will be done away : the Lamb, that is in the midst of the throne, shall wipe away all tears from his eyes. Then the pardon of all his sins will be declared. God will show to angels, men, and devils, that he is well pleased for the righteousness' sake of Christ. All the angelic host will admire and adore the grace which has been displayed in his conversion ; and the saint himself shall say, Amen, to all the praise. For he shall come to be admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe. At that day his soul will be taken to eternal glory, to dwell forever in the contemplation of the Saviour's beauties, enjoying his eternal smiles. God will be his eternal all, and he shall be full of glory. But " eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him."

To conclude :—This subject instructs us all ; it teaches us to be concerned to be always ready for our account ; to walk humbly and closely with our God ; to sit loose to all created objects ; and to set our affections on things above ; to improve all our mercies ; to redeem every hour of our time ; to hear the word of God, so that we may profit ; to look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life ; and to keep in view the end of our journey, being constantly looking unto Jesus. In short, what our text first said to the Romans, it now says to us all,—"**WATCH.**"

## DISCOURSE III.

*CHRISTIAN LIBERTY THROUGH CHRIST.*

PREACHED JULY 23, 1807.

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“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” JOHN x. 9.

ONE striking feature of the gospel of Jesus Christ is, its variety; for it makes known the same truths by various methods, and in various ways. In the book of God, our attention is arrested to consider the things that belong to our peace, by well-chosen metaphors and suitable language; and, as it is God’s own word, it shall accomplish the end whereunto he has sent it, for which he has designed it, and to which he has said it shall prosper.

The chapter out of which we have read you a text, abounds with metaphors: in it God’s people are represented as sheep, to denote their simplicity, patience, usefulness, and meekness. Jesus Christ speaks of himself as the good Shepherd who has laid down his life for these sheep; and the church of God is described as a fold, into which our Lord will shortly bring all his flock, so that there shall be “one fold under one Shepherd.” In the beginning of the chapter, the Saviour shows the folly which those men manifest, who seek to get into his fold by some other way,

than by the door. The disciples understood not these sayings, yet without a parable spake he not unto them; but, having compassion on their infirmities, he told them, that he himself was the door of the sheep; that all who ever came before him were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. "I," says he in the words of our text, "am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." It is our design to consider these words, as affording a significant representation of Christ, and as describing the blessedness of all his people. Praying, therefore, for the Divine illumination, and trusting that our meditations will be profitable to all our souls, let us consider the passage:

I. As affording a significant representation of Christ.

The name of our Lord Jesus is as ointment poured forth: as, in all his offices, relations, and characters, he is exceedingly precious to the believing soul, he must be at all times worthy of our attention, nay, deserving of our highest admiration, ardent love, and constant praise. Let us, then, laying aside every other concern, fix our minds on Him, who is the object of angelic adoration, the delight of God the Father, and the only foundation of human hope.

It is very remarkable, that Jesus Christ is always spoken of in Scripture in that manner which is best suited to the sinner's wants. Does he hunger and thirst after righteousness? Christ is that bread of life, of which if a man eat, he shall live forever. Does he want a foundation on which to rest his eternal all? "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."



Does he lament his ignorance? Christ is the great Prophet and Teacher of his church. Is he oppressed with sin and guilt? Christ is an atoning Priest; "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Does he groan under the power of his enemies? Christ is King in Zion, and shall subdue them all. Or, is he put to flight through terror? "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Does he often forsake and wander from the Saviour? Christ is the good Shepherd that will bring him back to the fold. Are any of you desirous of entering into the state of believers here, and into the house where they expect to dwell above? "Christ is the door: by him if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." This representation of Christ, therefore, is designed to teach us this one great and important truth: that Christ is the only way of entrance into the church militant below, and into the church triumphant above; yes, we say that Jesus is the door, through which poor sinners of the race of Adam are admitted,

1. Into the privileges of the gospel church.

That this is the true literal meaning of the passage is evident, both from the design of the chapter, and from the latter part of the verse:—from the design of the chapter, which represents Jesus as sustaining a character which he exercises in the church militant, and describes the people of his choice as scattered about, and shortly to be gathered together; from the latter part of the verse, which mentions blessings that are to be enjoyed in the present state: "He shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

The privileges of the saints are very great and

numerous; and what renders them so infinitely valuable is, that the possession of them is secured to all real believers, by the oath and promise of the Lord.

What excellent enumerations of many of them do we find in the book of God, especially in the eighth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: there you may find a list of the greatest blessings that God can bestow upon man, or that man can possibly receive. It would be in vain for us to attempt to mention all these inestimable privileges, but it may not be amiss to mention one or two of them, and see that they are all enjoyed through Christ; that he is the gate that leads to the garden of the Lord, where grow the choicest flowers; where spring the best delights. To approach unto God, to be favored with sweet access to the God of heaven and earth; to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, by the means of prayer, and other exercises of religion, is the most honorable and satisfying employment in which we can engage. It is a privilege which we can never too highly estimate, and a duty which we cannot too frequently perform. "Let their money perish with them," said a noble marquis, "who esteem all the gold and silver in the world worth one hour's communion with Christ." And to this there is no doubt but every one, who feels the power of real religion, will heartily assent. But the man who is yet in his sins, who has not known Christ, or entered in by the door, knows nothing of this privilege: he knows not what we mean by communion with God, does not see its necessity, and having never enjoyed it, cannot feel its advantages; for it is through Jesus that "we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father."

Wicked men often attend the means of grace, and some of them, who are awfully deceiving themselves, fancy that their attendance upon the means will save their souls, not recollecting that Jesus Christ is the only way of entrance into such a state as that in which a man can properly enjoy the means of grace. When the man has had a view by faith of Jesus, and has been contemplating with wonder, love, and praise, the expressions of his tenderness, the dignity of his person, the riches of his grace, and the love of his heart, then it is that he can properly enjoy the means, or rather the God of the means. Without an entrance by Jesus, the door, our prayers will be formal, our praises hypocritical, and our whole services adapted to make the Lord refuse to hear us.

The great and precious promises of the word of God are only applied by the Spirit to those who are interested in the Saviour. To him who has passed through Jesus, the door, are the promises of the Bible made; for they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one of these shall fail of its accomplishment. Whilst those who are in a state of nature have no solid satisfaction left when affliction seizes them, and outward circumstances seem to frown upon them, God keeps them in perfect peace whose minds are stayed upon him; their faith in God and in his Son is the best remedy for the troubles of human life, and they are blest with strong consolation. Having entered in by Jesus, the door, they derive real, solid, and lasting happiness from the source where alone it can be found, and in God himself are all the springs of their felicity.

In short, let it be remembered, that there is not

one privilege enjoyed by the children of God, however great, but is enjoyed through Christ. It was in him they were chosen ; through him they are freely justified, really sanctified, and graciously adopted : through what he has done, we shall be safely conveyed over the troubles of life, sweetly consoled in the terrors of death, freely acquitted in the day of judgment, and finally admitted into the glories of heaven.

Do you want proofs of this ? Read the sacred word, where you will always find that Christ Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all and in all, in a sinner's salvation. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Here you see the apostle plainly shows the source of all our mercies, namely, Christ Jesus ; and, indeed, the volume of inspiration is filled with proofs, that Jesus is the only way by which we can obtain the enjoyment of any spiritual blessing. And if you ask any, who have been enlightened by Divine grace, whence it is that they are so happy, they will ascribe it all to Christ, and say, " By his grace we are what we are." Thus is Jesus the door by which we are admitted into the privileges of the gospel church.

2. He also is the way of entrance into the blessedness of the heavenly state.

It is lamentable to consider on what weak foundations many of our fellow-creatures rest their immortal concerns. Oh ! what numbers build their eternal all, on the absolute mercy of God, the external privileges they have enjoyed, or their own legal performances, and they look for salvation from no other source ; they will not hear that Je-

sus is the only Saviour, but vainly attempt to save themselves ; and whilst the Bible asserts, and experience proves, that " there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus," they will apply to any other person for relief but to him from whom alone it is to be obtained. " Being ignorant of God's righteousness, they go about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God " Jesus is the door to the regions of glory : " Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? " The foundation of all our preparation for heaven must be laid in our being washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

The joys of heaven are unspeakable, complete, and eternal ; " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." " In the Divine presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore." But, however great the glory, or lasting the happiness of heaven, it must be well understood and remembered by us, that if we know not Christ as our only Saviour, we shall never see its glory, or enjoy its pleasures. Would we be partakers of the felicity of the heavenly world, we must enter in by Jesus, the door ; it is only he who can prepare us for that happy state. And do you ask, How it is that he makes us " meet for the inheritance of the saints in light ? " the answer is, By imputing to us his own immaculate righteousness, whereby our sins are pardoned, and by affording us the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, whereby we are made holy. Without this

blessed preparation for glory, where God is we never can come, "the gift of God being eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Oh, let every one in the present congregation, lifting up to God the voice of prayer, exclaim, "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go in unto them and praise the Lord: this gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter!" That Jesus is the way to heaven is abundantly evident from the songs of the glorified, who ascribe all their felicity to him that "washed them from their sins in his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God." Yes, my brethren, those who now stand round the throne of God, to hunger no more, nor thirst any more, are "they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Jesus is the only door, then try no other: he is an open door, then try him: bless the Lord, who, in his designs of love and mercy, and in his preached gospel, has set open this way to himself; adore him for giving you an assurance of your acceptance through Jesus, and for sweetly drawing you to himself, whilst others were left to perish in their sins. Thus have we considered the representation of Christ which our text affords; let us now view the passage.

II. As describing the blessedness of all his people. They are here mentioned as entering in by the door.

What we have already said is sufficient to teach us that the language is metaphorical; that it implies their cordial reception of Christ, and their hearty belief in him; for, inscribed on this door, stand the soul-quickenings words, "Believe, and live." The blessedness of such as enter in by

Christ is thus described : " They shall be saved ; " " they shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Need we here observe, that these promises relate to the present life, are great and unspeakable in their nature, as vast as God can make them, and as suitable to the exigencies of the soul of a poor sinner, as it is possible for them to be ? To be a little more particular : three things are contained in the declaration of the text, namely, salvation, liberty, and provision.

1. Salvation.

By entering in through Jesus, the door, you secure your safety as it respects temporal calamities, spiritual distresses, and eternal woes.

Those who enter in by Jesus, the door, are safe in temporal calamities ; for " they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, that cannot be removed, but abideth forever." What, though the nation in which they live is the object of Divine displeasure and almighty wrath, God is saying unto them, " Come, my people, enter thou into thy chamber ; and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." Yes, Jehovah has an ark, in which he shuts up all his Noahs in public distresses. For it shall be well with the righteous, in what circumstances soever they may be placed. " The name of the Lord is a strong tower ; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Jesus is the believer's " rock, and fortress, and deliverer, his God, his strength, in whom alone he trusts, the horn of his salvation, and his high tower." " The eternal God is his refuge, and underneath him are the everlasting arms." " Happy are the people that are in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." The Christian's way

being committed to the Divine care, and the Lord being acknowledged in all his ways, he shall not be destitute of domestic mercies ; and although he may be tried in his family and circumstances, he shall be delivered out of his embarrassments, and all things shall work together for his good. Nay, though he is visited with bodily pains and afflictions, he shall be saved from their distracting influence, and blest with their purifying tendency. He shall glorify the Lord in the fires, and be made wiser and better, holier and happier, by all the trials he may be called to bear.

The saints, then, wherever they are, are safe as in the hollow of his hand : the Lord keepeth them as the apple of his eye. "The eyes of the Lord are always upon them, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year," to notice their condition and to supply their wants. Oh, how great was his care of his ancient Israel ! "In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." And we may rest assured, that as he is an unchanging God, the same care which was so remarkably exerted in behalf of Israel, shall be the protection of the saints to the latest age. "He shall deliver them from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence : " "They need not be afraid for the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day : nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness ; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon-day : there shall no evil befall them ; neither shall any plague come nigh their dwellings ; for he shall give his angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways ; they shall bear them up in their hands, lest



they dash their foot against a stone: they shall tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall they trample under foot." "I," saith the Lord, "will be with them in trouble, I will deliver them and honor them, with long life will I satisfy them, and will show them my salvation." And all this their security is the happy consequence of their entrance in by Jesus, the door. What, though they are persecuted by the world, they have to recollect that it hated Jesus the Master before it hated Christians the disciples; they are assured that Christ has overcome the world, and by that assurance are encouraged to be of good cheer.

So also shall they be saved as it respects spiritual distresses. When assaulted by Satan, "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him," and "the God of peace shall bruise him under their feet shortly." Although they now groan under the wickedness of their hearts, and long to be delivered from the body of this death, their great Master has declared, for their encouragement, that "sin shall not have dominion over them;" that "he will present them faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy;" yes, they shall appear as "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Sometimes they are distressed on account of the hidings of God's face, yet are they safe, because he will return unto them in mercy, he will not finally leave them, nor forsake them.

Once more, we say, that they are safe from eternal woes. It is an awful truth, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" but it is a glorious fact, that to those who have entered in by Jesus, the door, there is

no condemnation ; that they are safe from the avenging justice of an angry God, and from the direful effects of the Divine displeasure, which the ungodly must endure to all eternity. They shall not fall into hell, because eternal love chose them, almighty grace redeemed them, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies them for the enjoyment of heaven.

And is not this a great salvation ? It is the salvation of which "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." It is that which is the subject of the Scriptures, the joy of Christians, and the song of heaven. Oh, then, let all beware of neglecting it ; let those who have entered in by the door rejoice in their title to it ; and let no presumptuous wretch dare to lay a claim to it, who, instead of being united to Christ, is dead in trespasses and sins. True believers are not only promised salvation, but—

2. Liberty. "They shall go in and out." Alas ! they were once, with the rest of mankind, held in bondage and confinement, but "by the blood of the covenant, God has sent forth his prisoners out of the pit wherein there was no water." They were once the prisoners of the law, as they had all broken its righteous requirements ; they were all exposed to its fearful curses ; it demanded of them that satisfaction which they were incapable of giving : it therefore threatened them with eternal death, and held them in bondage ; but when they entered in by Jesus, the door, their debt was discharged by him, and he liberated them out of their bondage. "The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," the old serpent, the devil, formerly had them under his power, confined in his strong

holds, bound in his chains, and employed in his drudgery ; but God, having weakened his power, turned him out of his strong holds, broke the prisoners' chains, and has taken them into his service, and made them free.

Once they were tied and bound with the chain of their sins, but suffice it to say, that when they entered in by Jesus, the door, they were made free from sin and every kind of bondage, in which they were held ; no longer do they strive after the gratification of their own evil propensities, but yield themselves the servants of God, and bring forth the fruits of holiness. " Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." " Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." " By me, if any man enter in," says Christ, " he shall go in and out." And how shall we describe or explain the liberty of the children of God ? It includes real pleasure and holy boldness in communion with God. The saints shall go in and out. Their communion with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit, shall be constant and unwearied. They shall walk in all the ordinances of the Lord. That service in which they are engaged is perfect freedom. Their slavery is changed into the state of children, and their duty into choice ; hence, their grateful inquiry now is, " What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits ?" So that the liberty of God's children is by no means a liberty to sin ; no, they never court that liberty, but detest it as the greatest slavery. How awful must that system be which encourages sin under the idea of gospel liberty. Such a system is not from God, but from the devil, the father of lies. Avoid it then, fly from it, detest it ; nor ever imagine, that God will countenance, or in the least,

way approve, sin in his people : for holy are all his ways, and holiness becometh them that serve him forever. That man who pleads for the commission of sin, and calls it the liberty of God's chosen, plainly proves that he is in bondage even until now.

There is one great and important blessing more, mentioned in the text, and that is—

8. Provision. "He shall find pasture."

Real believers are the sheep of God's pasture. "The Lord," says the psalmist, "is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." The spiritual wants of those who have entered in by the door, are supplied with spiritual blessings: for your support and nourishment, ye children of God, there are the lively oracles of God, and Jesus himself. "Thy word," says one, "was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was the rejoicing of my heart." Make the Bible your constant study: by this blessed book you understand the will of God, your mouth is filled with arguments, and your soul derives fresh strength. Oh, let it be your meat and drink; live upon the glorious truths it reveals, and the glorious prospects it opens; let it be the man of your counsel: it well deserves your highest estimation, for it is the field in which the pearl of great price is hid; it is the pasture in which God appoints you to feed. Oh, then, "as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

Our Lord in the most charming accents exclaims, "I am the Bread of life." "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." "Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, ye have no life in you." He then must be the support of your souls; live upon his almighty fulness, his rich grace, his abundant mercy, and overflowing goodness. We cannot enlarge here, but must just say, that the food of the Christian is Divine in its nature, and nourishing in its effects.

It is Divine in its nature. The Bible is the word of God, and not of man: the subject of the Scriptures; the manner in which any thing is treated; their obvious design; the wonderful harmony of all their parts; the unblemished character of their writers; the wonderful way in which they have been preserved; the number of miracles by which they have been confirmed; the exact fulfilment of their prophecies; and, above all, the application of them to the conscience by the Holy Ghost;—are all incontestable arguments for the Divine authority of Scripture: and this Divine word, Christian, is to be your food. Jesus, too, is Divine; for "he is the Bread which came down from heaven: he that cometh to him shall never hunger, and he that believeth on him shall never thirst."

The believer's portion is also nourishing in its effects. The natural tendency of "the sincere milk of the word" is growth. "He that eateth the flesh and drinketh the blood of the Son of man, shall live forever." Christ gave his flesh for the life of the world, and he that partakes of this living bread hath everlasting life, and shall be raised up at the last day.

Do we not learn, from this subject, that Christ is the first and the last in a sinner's salvation ?

Without him you are condemned, enslaved, starving, and in the road to hell. Oh, then, look to Calvary for mercy, for salvation, for liberty, and for food.

Are we not taught by these considerations, that those who gain admittance into the church any other way than by the door, are in an awful condition ? This is positively asserted in the first verse of the chapter before us. "He that entereth not by the door into the sheep-fold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." Oh, beware then, beware of resting in a religious education, in your being members of Christian churches, or any thing short of an approach to God, through Christ ; for if you profess to be in his fold, without passing through the door, you are accounted a hypocrite, and may expect a fearful looking for of judgment. Oh for grace to "strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat ; and strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

Is it not clear, that gratitude to that God who has opened this door for sinners is our incumbent duty ?

This is your way to Zion, O believer ; sing of the goodness of God ; sing to the praise of him who brought you into the good old way : and oh, "glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are his." Glorify him in your hearts, lips, and lives.

Are we not to expect, that the time when Jews and Gentiles shall both enter by this door will soon

arrive ? Read the sixteenth verse, where the Redeemer says, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice ; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." Blessed be God for such a declaration ! O that he would bring in the Jews with the fulness of the Gentiles ! He shall accomplish it in his time ; shortly they shall be

All travelling through one beauteous gate,  
To one eternal home.

Oh, let us all pray that God would hasten the number of his elect, and bring them all through the door into the way to glory. Amen.

## DISCOURSE IV.

*MISERY THE FRUIT OF SIN.*

PREACHED DEC. 20, 1807.

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**"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness."**  
**EPHESIANS V. 11.**

SUCH is the command of the God of heaven and earth, to all those who profess to love his Son, and enjoy the influences of his Spirit; who have espoused his holy and Divine religion, and profess to be travelling through a world of trials and difficulties, to that rest which remains for the people of God. Our text is the voice of God himself, through the instrumentality of his servant and apostle Paul, and therefore not only demands attention, but requires obedience, on pain of the displeasure of the Ruler of the skies.

Indeed, we may suppose, we may say, that all the writers of the Scriptures, all the providences of God, all the heirs of glory, all the angels in heaven, all the condemned in hell, are now saying to us, in the language of the text, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." The text, my brethren, is the voice of every line of the Bible, of every poor backsliding soul, of every trembling conscience, and of every drop of the blood of Jesus. And shall these join their pleas in vain? Gracious God! enable us now to "cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the



whole armor of God :” let it not be our condemnation that light is come into the world, and we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil ; but may we do the truth, and come to the light, that our deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God ; and, henceforth, may we have the testimony that we please Thee !

The preceptive part of the Bible is neither to be reckoned the ground of our acceptance with God, nor thrown aside as legal ; for upon our obedience to that depends our recommending the gospel to others, our imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the evidence of our possessing the Holy Spirit, and the justification, not of our persons, but of our faith before God and men.

Our text is introduced just after the apostle Paul had been warning the Ephesians against being partakers with the children of disobedience, by avoiding their former condition, and their present state. “ Ye were,” says he, “ sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as children of the light, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” Therefore might he say with propriety on this account, because ye were once darkness, but are now light, “ have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.”

May He who said, “ I am the light of the world,” illuminate our dark minds, and give us in his light to see light, that, in our meditations on this passage, we may not darken counsel by words without knowledge ; but may be encouraged to proceed in our journey towards that place where the sun shall be no more our light by day, nor the moon by night ; but where the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and our God our glory.

We observe that our text,

I. Describes the sins of men ; and,

II. Cautions us against them.

I. This language of the apostle describes the sins of men ; they are " the unfruitful works of darkness."

Man was at first created holy, placed in a happy situation by his Maker, and endowed with the greatest blessings ; but, by his disobedience to the command of God, he rendered himself exposed to the death of the body and the soul, and, ever since, all his numerous posterity have been born in sin, and have continued to live and die under the influence of enmity to God, where Divine grace has not changed the heart. The condition of every one in a state of nature is truly lamentable and awful : he is a sinner against God, an enemy to God, and at an awful distance from God ; he is said to be alienated from the life of God. Sin is his element, his business, his study, his delight ; and, if it be not pardoned, will prove his ruin.

Surely, it need not be proved to persons who have the least knowledge of their Bibles, that their sins are the unfruitful works of darkness, which are elsewhere called " the works of the flesh." " Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these : adultery, fornication," and such like ; " the deeds of the body." " If we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." They are also called dead works. " How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works ?" And, they are styled, the lusts of the devil. " Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."

But, in our text, sins are called " the works of darkness, the unfruitful works of darkness ;" to

this description it behoves us now more particularly to attend. You see that they are described by their nature and tendency.

1. By their nature.

“The works of darkness.” Good men are elsewhere said to be called out of darkness, and to be delivered from the power of darkness; and here the sins committed by the ungodly are expressly styled the works of darkness. Does not this denote the uncomeliness of sin? What is there, my brethren, in the vast creation of God, that is more filthy, more abominable, either in the sight of a sanctified soul, of a holy angel, or of the eternal God? As sin is the work of Satan, as it is the delight of those who never tasted the refined joys of Jesus’s salvation, and as it proceeds from a heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, it must be loathsome. Darkness itself is not half so uncomely; nay, that darkness which might be felt was but a faint shadow of the disagreeable appearance and odious nature of sin. Those whose minds have been illuminated by the Divine Spirit to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, need no other arguments to convince them that it is uncomely; for, beholding it with eyes anointed with his eye-salve, they cry out, Unclean, unclean.

Again, does not the phrase, “works of darkness,” denote the bewildering nature of sin?

And sin, my brethren, is the means of rendering men insensible to the voice of God and conscience; stupid, notwithstanding the loud calls of the ministers of the gospel, nay, hardened under its sound: having once set your foot in the broad way that leadeth to destruction, you find it no easy thing to turn back, to come to the way of peace;

for, "can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is really astonishing how men are led on from one sin to another, till, at last, they fall into the lake of fire and brimstone, to remain forever with all the nations that forget God. Before they are carried down so low as others by the torrent of iniquity, could you foresee some of their future actions, and tell them of them, they would not believe themselves capable of performing such atrocities; nay, they would detest the thought. How strikingly do we see this exemplified in the conduct of Hazael, who, when conversing with the prophet Elisha, saw him weep, and said to him, "Why weepeth my lord? And Elisha answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. And Hazael said, But what! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." And afterwards he did those very things. Oh, then, see here the bewildering nature of sin: like a man in thick darkness, the sinner is led on he knows not whither. And here I cannot help mentioning the salutary caution of the apostle Paul, "Avoid the very appearance of evil."

Again, does not this expression denote the awful state of those who commit sin?

They are in a state of ignorance. "They know not, neither do they consider the work of the Lord, or the operation of his hands." They know not whither to apply for happiness, and therefore seek

it in improper directions. They are altogether ignorant of God, of Christ, and of themselves; for (O lamentable fact!) "darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people."

They are also in a state of unbelief. Numbers of them will not believe that the darkness of the Mosaic economy is past, and the true light now shineth. They will not believe, therefore, on Him whom the Father hath sent; but "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but they love darkness rather than light."

Consequently, their state, must be a state of error.

In vain do they attempt to illuminate the darkness by natural religion, or systems of philosophy: one man professes to teach the way of heaven by the works of the law; and another sets up the false glare of human reason, as the true light of the world. "The blind lead the blind, and they both fall into the ditch." No reformation of their own has ever been sufficient to destroy in them the love and practice of the works of darkness. But the apostle in our text describes the sins of men,

2. By their tendency. They are "the unfruitful works of darkness." The apostle, addressing the Romans, says, "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness; what fruit had ye then in those things of which ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death." By their being unfruitful, we are to understand that they are of no good tendency, but that they are hurtful, inasmuch as they now defile, and hereafter damn the soul.

Men are dreadfully mistaken when they suppose that they are in the road to happiness, whilst they

are in the way of sin ; for, saith the Scripture, "Whoever hardened himself against God, and prospered?" Those who practise the works of darkness, expose themselves to want, to disgrace, to pain, to mental distress, to temporal calamities, and to hell itself. That some fruit is produced by sin we do not deny, but it is of the most awful kind. The direful effect and the sad fruit of Adam's transgression is felt by all : that brought death into the world, and all our woe. And let us, for a few moments, look at the ill effects of sin, as strikingly displayed in a few instances in Scripture. For what was the wife of Lot turned into a pillar of salt ? It was that God might thereby display his hatred to sin ; for you will remember that she had transgressed the Divine command, and for that transgression was made an eternal monument of his displeasure. Again, I inquire, Why was Gehazi struck with the leprosy ? why was his body made white as snow ? My brethren, it was for sin ; it was one of the fruits of the works of darkness ; and to this day it remains recorded in the Scripture, that we may see that our God is the God of truth, and will manifest his displeasure against the workers of iniquity. Let me ask again, Why was Herod smitten by the angel of the Lord, and eaten up of worms ? Scripture itself replies, "Because he gave not God the glory." He had long practised the works of darkness, and their awful effects he experienced in the pain of his dissolution. And why did Ananias fall down and give up the ghost after his conversation with Peter ? Or, why did Sapphira, his wife, expire so soon after ? Both these circumstances took place by the just vengeance of God upon sin ; for they had not "lied unto man, but unto God."

And let me ask once more, Why were Nadab and Abihu fearfully devoured by fire from the Lord? This also was for sin; "for they offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not."

These, then, are a few of those temporal calamities with which God has visited the workers of darkness: but what are these to that dreadful doom which succeeds them? Compared with that, all these things are but as the small dust of a balance, without weight, and without regard; for we are told, "the end of these things is death." Yes, my friends, "death is the wages of sin," death temporal and spiritual, but chiefly death eternal. Whilst the righteous are called to inherit "glory, honor, and immortality, and eternal life," sinners "go away into everlasting punishment:" are "turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God:" are "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power:" are doomed to endure the gnawings of "the worm that never dies," and to burn eternally, "in the fire that never shall be quenched."

And, O sinner! can you call your life a life of pleasure? Will you not "die as a fool dieth, and will not your end be without honor?" Is God to be discarded, religion to be despised, and your soul neglected for this, for the torments of everlasting despair? O, sinner, consider your ways.

Thus you see that the apostle, when he denominates sin the unfruitful works of darkness, does not mean to say that it produces no effect, that it is followed by no consequences, that it is entirely a neutral thing, and makes a man neither better nor worse; but he shows us that it produces no solid, real, lasting good. Sin may and does afford

momentary gratification to the minds of its unhappy and unhallowed votaries ; but this gratification will not bear being reflected upon, and never lasts, but invariably makes a man discontented and dissatisfied. The works of the flesh are to every good thing unfruitful. Solomon, who had tried them all, gives us their amount, their sum total, in the following words :—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." "There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked," exclaims one of God's favorites ; and surely we must believe these holy and heavenly men ; but if this be not enough to prove that the works of darkness are unfruitful, you are called upon to witness the deathbeds of those who have spent their whole lives in the commission of them, and we cannot refuse to believe their testimony ; and they unite in showing us, that "the way of transgressors is hard ;" that there is no peace in the conscience of an ungodly man ; that they never have enjoyed any thing which it is worth living to enjoy, but that there was the rankest poison in their cup of pleasure ; and that, when dying, they endure the awful anticipations of the pains of hell.

Will not this suffice for the discussion of the first part of our subject ? We now hasten to the latter, and observe, that the apostle, in the text, not only describes the sins of men, but

II. Cautions us against them.

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," is his language.

Here observe, that he does not say, Partake not of such and such a sin, whatever you do of the rest ; but condemns sin altogether, and says, "Have no fellowship with any of them, but rather reprove them."



The word fellowship, in Scripture, is used to signify joint-interest, partnership, and familiar intercourse ; hence the saints are said to " have fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ ;" and ministers and people are united in the fellowship of the gospel. The Lord's Supper is the communion or fellowship of the body and blood of Christ ; and we are commanded to " have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We shall illustrate this exhortation by saying, Do not associate with those who commit them ; do not occasion them by your evil example ; do not defend them by aiming to extenuate them ; do not partake with them, by not praying against them. And we will try to enforce these things by suitable motives.

" Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness ;" then, that is,

1. Do not encourage them, by associating with those who commit them.

The saints are described in Scripture, as being " men much to be wondered at : " as " a peculiar people, a holy nation," and so on. God blesses them with peculiar nearness to himself, and loves them with a peculiar love. They are strangers and sojourners here ; this is not their rest, it is polluted ; it is only a wilderness through which they must pass, a place that lies in their road ; an inn, at which they must lodge : they are the friends of one another, and the heirs of glory ; as such, therefore, it behoves them to conduct themselves wisely, discreetly, towards those who are without, who do not belong to their fraternity, and are not travelling their road. You cannot understand us as saying, that you are to have no concern with the world ; that you are to neglect your business,

and turn monks ; or that you must not speak or deal with those who make no profession of religion : neither would we intimate, that you are supposed to have that faculty by which you can know who are real Christians, and who are not ; or that, in every case, you can tell whether you are to be familiar with this or that man.

But there is great propriety in an expression which you have, no doubt, frequently heard, and which cannot be too often repeated : " Be in the world, but not of the world." Let it appear by your actions, that the sons of Belial are not your favorites, nor the votaries of pleasure your intimate friends. Seek to be delivered from the evil that is in the world. Let the language of David be uttered from the bottom of your heart, " I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of those that keep thy precepts."

For, why should you associate with the persons from whom you will be eternally separated ? And why should you not delight in the company of those who, like yourselves, are travelling to that place,

" Where our best friends and kindred dwell,  
Where God our Saviour reigns ?"

I think that one reason why every good man dreads hell so much is, because of the vile company it contains ; and really, if you would have no fellowship with the works of darkness, you must not associate with the transgressors, and those who keep not the Divine law. But again, if you wish and long to obey the command in the text, respecting the unfruitful works of darkness,

2. Do not occasion them by your evil example.
- The saints " are called to holiness ;" " they are

said to be the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh ;” and God says to them, “ Be ye holy, for I am holy.” “ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.” “ Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” “ Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The end of Christians in their walk and conversation should be to recommend religion ; so that, by their attachment to one another, by the good fruit they produce and the virtues they exhibit, men may be constrained to admire the blessed effects of the gospel of Jesus.

But is this the case ? Alas, alas ! if it be, it is but in a very small degree ; as professors of religion, shame and confusion of face belongeth unto us, because so few of us “ adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things ;” and so many cause the name of professors of religion to be hated by the men of the world. Oh, this is a serious charge ; if our conduct is unholy and unclean, we are actually forwarding the devil’s work, and encouraging men to continue to practise the works of darkness. Oh, for more of the influences of the Divine Spirit ! Oh, for more application of the blood of Jesus ! Oh, for more enjoyment of the light of the Divine countenance ! These things would, undoubtedly, tend to the transforming our bodies and spirits into the likeness of Him, whose we are and whom we serve. But how often do we grieve the Spirit, think little of the blood of Jesus, pray but formally for the light of God’s countenance ! and then we need not in the least

be astonished, that it should please the Lord our God to permit us to fall into sin. Oh, then, by all means avoid the works of darkness ; and,

3. Do not defend the works of darkness by aiming to extenuate them.

The saints should exercise continued acts of repentance, should pray to see sin in its worst colors, in its blackest features, and in its exceeding sinfulness ; that so they may be confirmed in their hatred to it, and their desire to be delivered from it. But very often it happens, that after a child of God has fallen into the snare of the enemy, he wishes to make his sin appear as little as possible, and tries to extenuate it ; which shows that he still feels a desire after it, that it is yet hid in his heart, nay, it shows us that he has fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Never, Christian, never contrive sin, assist in it, rejoice in it, share the profits or pleasures of it ; never provoke men to it, never forbear to do all in your power to hinder men from committing it, never command it, nor commend it ; never neglect to reprove it, and then you will not have occasion to endeavor to extenuate it.

Oh, how much, of the spirit of the world do we, who call ourselves Christians, daily exhibit ! When we come to look into our own hearts, and examine ourselves upon these points, does not conscience tell us that we have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness ; nay, that we are partakers of other men's crimes ?

It would be an excellent thing for us, if we looked into the law of God more frequently ; then should we, in discerning the spirituality of the law and the broadness of the commandment, see our own sinfulness and vileness. Then we should be

obliged to confess our little conformity to the Divine commands, and to acknowledge our little likeness to God and Christ.

Again, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," that is,

4. Do not partake with them, by not praying against them.

The saints are to be men of prayer, and, on every occasion, are to lift up holy hands to God, praying always with all kinds of prayer and supplications. The necessity of prayer arises from numerous and interesting sources which we cannot now examine. Prayer and intercession are to be made for all men, and certainly the ungodly part of mankind demand a share in our prayers as well as the righteous. Notwithstanding the assertions of men, respecting the propriety of limiting our petitions, and not extending them to the whole world, we do assert, that the man who does not pray for the pardon of the sins of men, has fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Oh, be not partakers with other men's sins by this. Believer, do Satan, sin, and the world, tempt thee by various allurements, to various crimes? the remedy is still before thee, —pray. The Divine Being takes pleasure in seeing you striving against sin, against spiritual wickedness in high places; and so shall you best show your aversion to sin, either in yourselves or others, even by praying repeatedly and earnestly against it; and here is a promise for your encouragement, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." And again he has said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." But never forget that your great Master requires this of you, that you have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

**"Thus shall you best proclaim abroad  
The honors of your Saviour God ;  
While justice, temperance, truth, and love,  
Your inward piety approve."**

**"Those that honor me," says the Lord of heaven and earth, "I will honor." "And they shall be mine," saith the Lord, "when I make up my jewels."**

As motives to excite you to have no fellowship with the works of darkness, I would remind you that by so doing, you obey the Divine command ; follow the example of Christ ; answer the expectations of the world ; encourage your distressed brethren ; and yield comfort to the ministers of the gospel.

We say, Do not have fellowship with the works of darkness, and then you will obey the Divine command.

We need not repeat the numerous passages of Scripture in which God calls you to holiness ; read your Bible, and then you will find them ; but we wish you particularly to recollect, that God is your Father and your Friend. Christ Jesus is your Creator and Preserver, and therefore obedience to him is reasonable and equitable ; and surely, if you have any reason to believe that God has called you by his grace, gratitude will lead you to show forth the praises of him, "who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

If you obey the injunction of the text, you will also answer the expectations of the world.

Professors as well as preachers are as a city set upon a hill, that cannot be hid : you are watched by the world ; they readily expect more from you, than from those who never made a profession of the gospel. Do not then suffer men to say to you with contempt, "What do ye more than others?"

But let them see that religion is a thing that not only affects the heart, but influences the conduct, and makes a man what he formerly was not. And remember, that whilst you are doing this, you are glorifying God, and promoting the intents of him, whom you profess to love and serve.

Again, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," and then you will imitate the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Of him it is said, that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." "Follow me," was his own language; and we are told that he suffered, "leaving us an example, that we should tread in his steps." And surely it becomes us to grow up into Him who is our living Head in all things: to be made like unto Christ is an unspeakable blessing and honor. Oh, then, let that mind be in us, which was also in him. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: then let not us.

Again, By a holy conduct and conversation you encourage your distressed brethren.

When a poor, doubting, weak believer, who is much afraid that he shall backslide from the truth, and disgrace his Master's cause, beholds your good conversation among the gentiles, he will be comforted, and will reason thus: "There I behold an amiable Christian; he walks circumspectly, redeeming the time, he puts to silence the ignorance of foolish men by his actions; now naturally he is no more able to do this than myself, he is assisted by Divine grace; that grace also shall assist me, shall shield and guard me from the power of my foes, shall make me hold out to the end, shall be my staff when I pass over Jordan, and my song for ever and ever."

Once more, By avoiding the works of darkness, you comfort the ministers of the gospel.

Alas, they need comfort. Theirs is an arduous employment, it is a work to which angels are incompetent; they study, preach, and spend themselves for you, and will you refuse to comfort their minds? And you must not think that going to them, and telling them you were comfortable under their ministry, is enough; but let them see by your fruits that their labour is not in vain in the Lord, but that the truths they deliver have a blessed and lasting influence upon your life.

#### REFLECTIONS.

The man who yet works the works of darkness is in an awful condition.

The saints should cultivate fellowship among themselves, and with God, and with his Son.

The hypocritical professor will hereafter be discovered and condemned.



## DISCOURSE V.

*NEARNESS TO GOD DELIGHTFUL.*

PREACHED FEBRUARY 7, 1808.

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“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee.”

PSALM LXXXIV. 4.

THIS psalm is generally supposed to have been penned by David at the time when, by the ambitious and rebellious disposition and conduct of his son Absalom, he was driven from his city. The chief subject of it appears to be the sanctuary of God, and the ordinances of his house, for by their loss he had learned more highly to estimate their worth.

With the most animated language, the holy man expresses the amiableness, the loveliness of the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts; breaks out in ardent longings towards the courts of the Lord; represents his heart and his flesh crying out for the living God; envies the sparrow her house and the swallow her nest, because they were near the altars of his King and his God; and in the verse which we have selected as a text, pronounces a blessing upon those who dwell in his house. We are persuaded that this subject is highly interesting to every one in the Divine presence who is saying, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the

beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." From the text, then, we shall attempt to raise, illustrate, and confirm these three propositions:—

I. That there is a place peculiarly distinguished as the house of God.

II. That there are persons who find an abiding residence in it.

III. That such characters are truly blessed.

We remark I. That there is a place peculiarly distinguished as the house of God.

The whole creation is the workmanship of God ; for he is the Former of all things, visible and invisible ; for his pleasure they are and were created ; to him all beings bow, angels and archangels ; men and devils submit to his control, and are subject to his disposal. He is the Sovereign of universal nature, and the Manager of all worlds. He filleth all in all. This great God, in making known to us his mind and will, in order to suit our circumstances, and in compassion to our infirmities, has been pleased to represent the great things of his law in familiar language, and in terms with which we are well acquainted. Hence we read such language as our text, when mention is made of the house of God. The question then is, What is intended by the expression, and what place is that which is so honored, as to be called Jehovah's house ? For since "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," how can he be said to have any particular dwelling-place ? The place of glorified spirits is in Scripture called "a house ;" hence, says our Lord, "In my Father's house are many mansions ;" and the apostle, contrasting the future with the present state, exclaims, "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of

God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In that heavenly house, all the spirits of just men made perfect, all the angels of God, securely, happily rest and dwell ; for that is a house which cannot be removed, but abideth for evermore. And justly may the words of the text be applied to its heavenly inhabitants ; for they indeed are truly blessed, being for ever engaged in the worship, and employed in the service of a present Saviour. But to us, it does not appear, from the connexion of the text, that heaven is here intended, but rather, reference is made to the house of God below, to the church militant, to the worshipping assemblies of the saints, to the tabernacles of the Most High. David refers evidently to the Jewish tabernacle, whither, no doubt, he constantly went up to worship ; and the term, house of God, applies at large to the whole church, to every congregation of believers, and to every assembly of the people of God. The church of God, we say, is a house ; it is called so in different passages of Scripture ; thus we read, that " Wisdom hath builded her house : " that the spouse was " brought to Christ's banqueting house, and his banner over her was love : " that " Christ, as a Son, was faithful over his own house, whose house are we : " " that he was High Priest over the house of God : " " that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it : " that " holiness becometh the house of God."

With respect to this house, be it observed, that Jesus Christ is the foundation on which it rests : for " other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The inhabitants of

it are redeemed sinners who have been taken from the ruins of the fall, and adopted into the family of God ; here they reside and share domestic blessings, expecting, ere long, to be transplanted from this earthly residence, to the house of God above ; where they shall all be made pillars, to go no more out for ever. Spirituality is the characteristic feature of the men who dwell in this house, of the code of laws by which every thing is regulated, and of the employments and engagements of all belonging to it. But the idea of our text is not merely that the church is a house, but that it is the house of God. Let us for a moment investigate the propriety of the term, and show the claims of God to this building. The psalmist calls it, " thy house," and it will evidently appear to belong to no less a person than Jehovah, if we consider him as the planner, the former, the furnisher, and the inhabitant of the church. Observe then,

1. That Jehovah planned it.

In the councils of eternity, he determined to make man, foresaw his fall, and devised a scheme for his recovery. He was resolved, in his almighty mind, to rescue man from the pit of perdition, and frustrate the designs of hell, by sending his dear Son into the world, to lay down his life to redeem him. Hence he knew the number of all his saints, and determined on the objects of his sanctifying grace, so that those who really belong to the church of Christ are the chosen of God ; thus saith David in another psalm : " Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." Nor less did the Almighty foreordain the means by which this church should rise in the world ; for he beheld it from eternity, notwithstanding all opposition, and

looking like the temple of God amidst all the attacks of his enemies; he so ordained it, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and he well knows the time when its great Zerubbabel "shall bring forth the head-stone thereof with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it." The Almighty, however, not only planned, but,

2. He actually formed the church.

"Every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God:" all the creation is the product of his infinite power and skill: "the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament sheweth his handy work;" but in a more particular sense, in a spiritual point of view, is Jehovah the builder of the church: hence says the apostle, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that we should walk in them." He laid the foundation, and he erected the edifice: by calling men under the preaching of his gospel, he makes them members of the mystical body of Christ, and inhabitants of the church of the living God. Every man that is a Christian, is so by the work of God: no human aid, nor will of man, can make a new creature; for the church of Christ consists of men that are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Whatever believers are, they are so by the grace of God. How mistaken, then, are those persons who imagine that they have always been in the church even from their birth; have been brought up in the house of God! whereas a man must be a new creature, must be born again of the incorruptible seed that liveth and abideth for ever, before he can say that he dwells in "thy house, O Lord of hosts." But once more we observe,

### 3. That it is by God that this house is furnished.

When we say that it is furnished, we mean that it is provided with every thing needful ; and who can doubt that this is done by God ? For the perusal, the instruction, the correction, the nourishment of his children, he inspired and conveyed to them his own precious word. The saints also are adorned with every gift and grace of the Holy Spirit : their faith, their love, their patience, their hope, their zeal, their humility, are all of the operation of the Holy Spirit : by these they are enabled to believe the promises of God ; to entertain the highest affection for their great Householder, and for one another ; to suffer the difficulties of the present state, and to bear them all with the prospect of a glorious immortality ; to promote the cause of their Redeemer, and to wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. Adorned with these graces, they look forth as the morning, " fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." They are all glorious within ; how wisely and how well are they provided in their spiritual house with every thing that is necessary for their welfare ! They are by no means left to themselves ; for God " is their sun and shield : he will give grace and glory ; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Oh how " beautiful for situation is Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth ! " " Walk about Zion, and go round about her : tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation following." But I must observe, lastly, and chiefly, that the church is called the house of God,

### 4. Because it is inhabited by God.

The Lord dwelleth in Zion : there in a peculiar

manner he displays the greatness of his glory, the wonders of his power, and the riches of his grace. Of the church he says, "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." "This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever." The apostle John says, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us; and his love is perfected in us:" and "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Here he constantly bestows his ordinances, and affords his gracious, supporting, and comforting influences. Oh, what honor does this confer upon us, to have God himself dwelling among us! Oh, what condescension does it display, that he should reside among those who have rebelled against him! Oh, what safety does it insure! for if God be for us, nothing can possibly hurt us! Oh, what happiness does it promote! for it is his presence that makes heaven; and surely no person is so happy as he whom God deigns to visit and to bless by his constant presence.

Thus you see that the Lord's people is his portion: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance: thus you learn that the church is the house of God. This is the place so peculiarly distinguished; it is the church. Observe, then,

II. That there are persons who find an abiding residence in it.

"Blessed," says my text, "are they that dwell in thy house." The psalmist here has a reference to the priests and Levites, who were frequently officiating there, in their turns, night and day; and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Gibeon, where the ark and tabernacle were, who had frequent op-

portunities of attendance upon divine worship. Blessed then are the ministers, the priests and the Levites, that have their residence about the temple, and are in their courses employed in its services. But the words are of larger import, and the blessing contained in them belongs to all those who count it their happiness, and enjoy it as their privilege, to serve and worship God in his courts, who dwell in God's house, who are at home there, and therein transact their most important business. There are several passages of Scripture of similar import with our text : the saints are said to dwell in God's holy hill. David himself says, in another psalm, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever : " and speaking of Zion too, in another place, he says, "They that love his name shall dwell therein."

What is it, then, to dwell in God's house ? An answer to this question will form the whole of our discussion on this part of the subject : and you will bear with us whilst we remark, that it includes in it,

1. The most ardent attachment to the house of God.

David himself is an evidence of this : hence you hear him saying, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." His great love to the ordinances of God's house caused him to break out in such language as that of the psalm before us ; and his attachment to it arose from a renewed nature, without which no man can love God's house for its spirituality ; it sprung from past experience of Divine favor ; it originated in a sense of the need of that blessed water which can only be drawn from the wells of salvation. And this disposition will never



fail to characterize the persons alluded to in our text : those who dwell in God's house must necessarily possess a sense of the value of a station there : for would you choose a dwelling-place without some degree of attachment to it ? David was king over Israel, and yet he felt a love to the tabernacle and temple. He might have employed himself in the business of the world, but still love to God's house predominated in his mind. And O, how often do real christians long for the sabbath-day ! they are frequently supported through the vicissitudes of the week, by recollecting that soon the day of rest will come, when they shall serve God in his temple. They hail the morning of that day with prayer and praise, and find it to be the "best of all the seven." But here I must remark, how very different is the conduct of those men who think a sabbath a burden ; and say, When will it be over, that we may set forth wheat, and pursue our callings ? That man can never be said to dwell in God's house, who, when he attends it, comes only out of an idle curiosity, or sits and sleeps when he is there. None of you can be said to dwell in God's house, who do not love the place ; whilst those of you who know how to value Divine ordinances, are the persons who, I have no doubt, find an abiding residence in the Lord's house. Dwelling in the house of God implies,

2. Constant attendance upon it.

Can that man be said to dwell in God's house, who visits it but once a year, but once a month, but once a sabbath ? Impossible ! They that dwell in God's house, love as well one part of the sacred day as the other ; and do not mind sacrificing a few trifles to be constantly there. Is it likely that the man who dwells in God's house, can content

himself with coming in late, and thus disturb the worship of others? No: rather he will be one of the first that assemble in the sanctuary. He is always glad when it is said to him, "Let us go into the house of the Lord: our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." The worship and service of God is the delight of all the saints. And here lies the distinction between them and others: sinners *visit* God's house, but the saints *dwell* in it. They dwell there as a child dwells with his father; "for there they find a settled rest, while others go and come." It is their wish to obey their Lord, who tells them to "consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as they see the day approaching." The good man is thoroughly persuaded, that the time cannot be far distant, when he shall go up to God's earthly tabernacles no more. Sickness may seize him and confine him to his bed, and hereafter death must arrest him, and remove him from this world; so that while he has to lament the loss of the outward ordinances, one consolation still remains, namely, the prospect of the better house above, and the hope of engaging for ever in the worship of Him, whose service is now his delight. How dear are the ordinances of the Lord's house to the believing heart! Whilst the men of the world constantly resort to the unhallowed haunts of pleasure, he as constantly attends upon God's house; his heart is there: there dwell all those who are united to him, by being partakers of the same heavenly calling with him; and it is there that God himself, that Jesus Christ, his beloved Saviour, and the Lord the Spirit, peculiarly dis-

cover themselves to the child of God : hence, we remark, in the last place, that dwelling in God's house includes,

### 3. The greatest enjoyment in it.

Where ought a man in the general to enjoy so much, to be so happy, as at home ? The house of God then is the believer's home, therefore he is happy there. It would be in vain for me to attempt to mention all the privileges of the house of God, or to describe that blessedness which belongs to the pious, the sincere worshipper of Jehovah in his earthly courts. There his memory is refreshed in the things which he has heard, felt, and experienced, lest at any time he should let them slip : there the doubts that harass and perplex his mind, respecting his personal interest in the joys of salvation, are dispersed, and

" Light breaks in upon his eyes,  
With kind and quickening rays."

The graces that are in him ready to die, are strengthened, fresh life is put in his soul, and by the public worship of the sanctuary, he is inspired with courage, to go on the remaining part of the journey of life, leaning on his Beloved. Believe me, my friends, the Christian's dwelling-house is a happy place : everlasting love secures the habitation of the just, and God, even their own God, delights to bless them.

The ordinances of the church are the glass, through which the face of our adorable Immanuel is beheld : they are the channels through which God is pleased to convey his blessings down to men : in short, they are, in every point of view, calculated to promote happiness in the minds of the children of God. Oh Christians, whilst you dwell in the house of the Lord, never despair of

enjoying the blessings of grace. You know that he never said to any, Seek ye me in vain : be diligent then in the use of the means, that God may therein be precious to your souls. Never think of relinquishing your situation in the house of your God, because you have not always immediately found what you wanted : you recollect, no doubt, that when our Lord appeared after his resurrection to the disciples, Thomas was not there : now had he been there, he would never have had occasion to disbelieve that Jesus was raised from the dead. God loves them that love him, and dwells with the humble and contrite spirit. You have reason, you are bound, to expect the greatest of favors in the church of God ; and you may depend upon it, the great Head of the church has not raised your expectations to disappoint them, but will supply them, nay, will do exceeding abundantly, above all that you can ask or think. Still then make the church of Christ your abode, your residence, your home, for it was for that purpose that it was designed : it was intended by God to be an earthly tabernacle, in which you should pass the years of your minority ; to be the place of your abode antecedent to your entrance into the better house above. How well is it observed by the admirable poet,

“ The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make ;  
All join in Christ, their living Head,  
And of his grace partake.”

It is wisely and well adapted for a residence for you, furnished with every thing necessary, having the most glorious, the great Householder to superintend all its concerns, and every member of the family being a subject of the King in Zion. In short, it ever has been, now is, and shall continue

to be, the dwelling-place of the saints ; for they are they that dwell in this house. Let me show you,

III. That such characters are truly blessed.

For on them a blessing is pronounced in our text ; and wherein does their blessedness consist ? Is it in an increase of worldly prosperity ? Are we told that they shall be more respected by the world than their fellow-creatures ? or, are they to expect that their attendance upon Divine worship procures the favor of God, and by it they merit heaven ? No, beloved, no such things are mentioned, and I will venture to assert, that none such are expected by the sincere believer. But their reward is in their work, their blessedness is in their employment ; for, says my text, " They shall be still praising thee." It is true that there are numerous privileges insured to the attendants upon God's house, mentioned in various other parts of Scripture, but we shall confine ourselves at present to the idea of our text. Their blessedness, then, arises from the nature, and from the perpetuity, of their engagement.

1. The nature of their employment is a source of their happiness.

Their work is praise. " Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion : unto thee shall the vow be performed." " In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." " Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders."

When Christians properly consider the glories of the Divine nature, and the wonders God has wrought for them in their election, calling, adoption, justification, redemption, and sanctification, they cannot forbear bursting out in songs of praise and thanksgiving ; and truly " praise is comely for

the upright." The Lord Jehovah himself is the object of their praise and adoration : and what is he ? he is the source of all true knowledge, the author and donor of every good and perfect gift, with whom there is no variableness, nor the least shadow of a turn ; with him is the fountain of life. In him are all the supplies that we need, and from him proceeds every blessing, both temporal and spiritual. Viewing God then in this light, the saints make his temple echo with his praise : and must it not be blessedness itself to engage in such a delightful employment ? While many think it their happiness to fawn and cringe to their fellow-creatures, my brethren, be it our happiness to worship the King, the Lord of hosts. He must be blessed that praises God, because he is led to see that excellency and glory in the Divine Being, which must engage the adoration of those who are favored with the enjoyment of it. Ask the true Christian, why he praises that God, whom others neglect and slight : he will tell you, " Because I am enabled to see him engaged on my behalf, and all his perfections are on my side ; and I know that if God be for me, nothing that others are able to do against me can do me any injury."

The believer praises God for the blessings of his grace, for all the mercies he enjoys, and for the prospects he has of eternal life and blessedness ; then who can doubt that those who dwell in God's house are truly blessed ? Their employment comes the nearest to that of glorified saints in heaven, and has connected with it the most distinguished favors. Tell us no more then of carnal amusements, of sensual joys, which never yield any solid satisfaction : be it our happiness to dwell in the temple of God, and by Jesus Christ to " offer the

sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name." But if the blessedness of the saints arises from the nature of their employment, much more will it do so,

2. From its perpetuity. "They will be still praising thee." Similar to this is the resolution of the psalmist, contained in the 146th psalm. "While I live will I praise the Lord : I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being." The pleasures of the followers of the Lamb are not transient, but lasting ; they are never to be interrupted : by day and by night they warble the praise of their Creator and Redeemer. Thanksgiving to God shall check the mourning sigh, to which they are liable to give vent under trouble : all through life the Divine praise shall employ their tongues, nay, when the powers of language fail in the article of death, their streaming eyes shall intimate the joys they cannot speak. And what think you shall be their employment after the last conflict is over, and the chains which confined them to flesh and blood are broken ? Then shall they rise to join the heavenly musicians, to sing that song which none can learn but the redeemed. Nor shall the glowing troops that surround the throne of God and the Lamb, sing more loudly than those who have been brought out of every nation, kindred, and tongue, and people, to shout for ever, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

The sweet work, the glorious theme of praise to Jesus shall occupy eternity itself, and when unnumbered ages have rolled away, yet it may be said, "They shall be still praising thee."

Such is the employment of those who dwell in the Lord's house ; it is a perpetual engagement, and therefore they are truly blessed to whom it belongs. If there are any believers here in the house of God at this time, let me tell them never to be dumb in the praise of their great Lord. Praise him, Christian, with joyful lips. Praise him, by reviewing and acknowledging his goodness ; by speaking to those around you of his greatness ; and by acting before all to his glory. Praise him in your families, praise him in the world, praise him in your closets ; but more especially praise him under the sacred roof, within the temples of the living God : so shall he grant you the light of his countenance, and the visits of his love ; so shall he meeten you for the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Having gone through what I proposed, I will close this discourse with one remark, which is this :—

Regularity of attendance upon the house of God is a pleasing sign, but no decisive evidence of a man's being a real Christian.

We cannot tell the motives that bring you to the temple of God. You may come, for aught we know, from custom, or because you feel a curiosity to know what is done there : we are not acquainted with the feelings of your mind when you are there ; they are only known to that God, whose prerogative it is to judge the heart. Examine yourselves to know whether your after conduct is influenced by any thing you have heard from the mouth of God's servants in his temple. See whether you are the characters that dwell in God's house, and have any right to claim their privilege, or any taste for it. May God bless his word, through Jesus Christ. Amen.



## DISCOURSE VI.

*DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST.*

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*"He is Lord of all." ACTS x. 36.*

THE ardor of that affection which the apostles and primitive Christians felt for the Saviour, is truly remarkable, and well worthy of our imitation, upon whom the ends of the world are come. When they were addressing their fellow-mortals on the important concerns of the soul, if his name did but come under their notice, for a moment, they left their subject to speak of some of his distinguished excellences. In many instances we behold this in the discourses and epistles of the apostle Paul; and can it not be perceived in the language of Peter, which now lies before us? "The word," says he, "which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ;" and then, as he had formed the highest ideas of his character, he adds that sentence which we have selected for a text, and which, in the New Testament, is inclosed in a parenthesis, "He is Lord of all."

The honor of the Saviour cannot be an unwelcome or an unpleasant subject of consideration to those among us to whom "his name is as ointment poured forth:" our hearts are inditing a good matter, when the things concerning the King are our subject: for "He is fairer than the children of men, grace is poured into his lips; therefore God hath blessed him for ever." His name shall be remem-

bered in all generations, the people shall praise him for ever and ever. The glories of Jesus are the objects of angelic research; why should they not be the theme of our meditations? for "He is Lord of all." We will attempt then, to illustrate the honor this text confers on the Saviour, to prove its truth, to show its propriety, and to point out its influence. Let us then, briefly; in the first place,

1. Illustrate the honor this text confers on the Saviour, that so we may understand it.

It represents him as "Lord of all," and does not this intimate his right of creation, possession, and dominion over the inanimate creation, the whole church, yea, all things in heaven or on earth? When our Redeemer is styled "Lord of all," it includes,

1. His creation of all things.

It is the Lord that made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; Jesus made them, therefore he is Lord. "All things were created by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him; for he is before all things, and by him all things consist:" so that when the believer surveys the beauties of nature, he can say, "My Jesus made them all!" The sun that rules by day, the moon that shines in the night, "that great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts," and this earth, which we inhabit, are all the work of his fingers. "The heavens declare his glory, and the firma-

ment showeth forth his handy work." The whole universe was made by him, and formed, when as yet it was not; the glory of his perfections is displayed in the works of his hands: his power in producing them; his wisdom in arranging them; and his goodness in preserving them. But some will say, Do we not, in ascribing the work of creation to Jesus, wrong the Father and eternal Spirit? By no means: for the acts of the Three that bear record in heaven, are, like their nature, one. But this doctrine is thus represented in the sacred volume, especially in the New Testament, and it is well said to be a truth which imparts an unutterable dignity to Christianity; a truth which lays the foundation for the comfortable hopes of a Christian; a truth which will render the mystery of our redemption the wonder and delight of eternity.

O that we may all experience the new-creating power of Christ! for all believers are his workmanship, created in him unto good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them. He that formed the universe, can create in us a clean heart, and renew in us a right spirit. Grace has made a new world. Oh that we may dwell in it! for "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new!" and "He is Lord of all."

Again, does not the language of our text intimate,

2. His universal possession? For he not only made all these things, but he now holds them in the hollow of his hand. All are his, and this appears to be the meaning of the term "Lord" in various passages of Scripture. Every thing is the property and right of Jesus; for has any one taken them out of his hands? or, has he lost his power to uphold and preserve them? Both these things

are impossible. He possesses all glory in his own nature, for he is the Lord of glory ; he only has life, and it is he that animates every living soul ; all things subsist by his bounty. But O, how extensive are his riches of grace ! how large the storehouse of blessings he commands ! how abundant that fulness which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in him ! Not only does he possess these blessings, but he hath promised to communicate them to us ; for “ He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” As he possesses all things, he has said, “ Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, I will do it.” And the saints may rejoice that all are theirs, whether the ministers of the gospel, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are theirs, for they are Christ’s, and “ He is Lord of all.” But the honor that our text confers on the Lord Jesus includes in it,

3. The extent of his dominion. For the term “ Lord,” in Scripture, very frequently signifies one that has rule or authority. And does not Jesus govern all ? Angels, men, and devils, are all either his willing or involuntary subjects. It is his to say to this man, “ Go, and he goeth ; to another, Come, and he cometh.” He maintains an uncontrolled sway over heaven, earth, and hell ; but most eminently is he Ruler in Israel, and King of saints. He exercises a spiritual government over his church ; and of the increase of his government there shall be no end. It behoves us to submit to his will, for his commandments are not grievous ; to conduct ourselves as faithful subjects ; to be jealous of his honor ; to place on his head many crowns ; to shout for joy, saying, “ Hallelujah, for

the Lord God omnipotent reigneth;" and to expect to be ourselves kings and priests unto him for ever, where there shall be no enemies to him or us, and opposition shall have fled for ever. As Lord or Governor of all, it belongs to him to communicate his blessings just as he chooses, to send men to preach his gospel wherever he will, and to bestow on his faithful subjects a crown of glory, brilliant like his own.

The language of our text, then, does imply that he first formed all things, that he still possesses them, and that whilst earthly honors totter to the ground, and states once illustrious fall to rise no more; his is a kingdom which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever, "He is Lord of all." Having thus attempted to illustrate the text, that so we may understand it, let us,

II. Prove its truth; that so we may believe it. And if it be asked, How do we know that Jesus is Lord of all? we answer, by referring you to the language of infinite wisdom; the universal assent of all the saints; the confession of his most inveterate enemies; and the songs of the glorified in heaven.

As the law and the testimony should ever be the arbiter in cases like these, we will adduce,

1. The language of infinite wisdom, as a proof that Jesus is Lord of all. And here he is called a Saviour, Christ the Lord, Lord both of the dead and the living, the second Man, the Lord from heaven, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, the Lord of hosts, God over all, blessed for ever. These honorable titles distinguish the Saviour above all the sons of men, or all the angels of God; they bid us view him as "Lord of all." Jehovah himself has universally declared him as

such ; that word which is true and faithful, one jot or tittle of which can never fail, that word, which is the word of God, and not of a man, plainly shows that he is invested with the greatest honor. Had he been so denominated only by our fellow-men, we might have called it in question ; but when we recollect that it is the voice of God, and not of a man, which distinguishes him as the Creator, Possessor, and Governor of the ends of the earth, this must satisfy us. We may attend in the next place,

2. To the universal assent of all the saints.

Was there ever one of the redeemed of God who would refuse to crown him Lord of all ? Has there ever been a single instance of a Christian not loving the Saviour, or not feeling the tenderest concern for his honor and glory ? Have not might, majesty, and dominion, been ascribed to him by all really enlightened men ? The sound of "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ," now reverberates on my ear, as proceeding from the whole church throughout all the world. This, indeed, ever characterizes the children of Zion, that they love to glorify their King : Abraham, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Micah, and all the patriarchs and prophets, entertained these views of the Saviour. And were these fools or madmen ? No : rather say, they were enlightened to behold his glory, and divinely taught this grand mystery of the kingdom.

Who is there that has believed through grace, that does not view the Saviour as thus glorious, or find his name, person, work, and office, to be precious ? Not one of God's redeemed ones in the present assembly, will refuse to acknowledge Jesus, and to ascribe to him great glory. All of you who have felt the power of his grace, in re-

newing and changing your hearts, now unitedly exclaim, "He is Lord of all." Observe,

3. The testimony of his most inveterate enemies.

When he was upon earth, the Jews, his persecutors, could not help confessing, than never man spake like him, and that even the winds and the sea obeyed him : they saw the miracles he wrought, and were filled with astonishment. A centurion, at his remarkable death, exclaims, "Verily, this man was the Son of God !" Nay, Satan himself must acknowledge his power, and say, "I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God ;" and again, the foul fiends whom he overcomes, cry, "Art thou come to torment us before the time ?" thus confessing his remarkable power over them, and saying, in effect, "He is Lord of all." And how often is there, even now, a conviction on the minds of his enemies, that the same Jesus with whom we have to do, is an awful Judge, and that there is no escaping the fierceness of his anger ! But O, how much they concede to the honor of the Saviour on a death-bed, when they exclaim, "O, Galilean, thou hast overcome me !" The judgment-day too will disclose his terrors, and terrible indeed will be their sensations, when the pit of hell has enclosed them, and they are left as eternal monuments, everlasting instances of the justice and terror of his power. Those who denied his authority on earth, must, with doleful lamentations, confess it in hell, "for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet : " being, even by the acknowledgment of his foes, "Lord of all."

Let us then urge for a further proof of the dignity of the Saviour's character,

4. The songs of the glorified in heaven.

They being no longer vexed with a body of death, nor liable to form imperfect ideas of the glory of the Saviour, are exclaiming to him, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints: who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy holy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest." They ascribe to him alone the complete and final victory over the Beast and his followers, and over Antichrist at large, and sing, "Salvation to our God, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." To him that "hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords," are all their praises directed; for they own him as over all, God blessed for ever, and celebrate his praises whilst eternity rolls along, for "he is Lord of all."

Having thus briefly endeavoured to prove the truth of the text, that so you may believe it, I would now endeavour,

III. To show its propriety, or equity, that so we may admire it.

Here we intend to investigate the claims of the Saviour to this pre-eminence, and see that it is right that he should be "Lord of all." And we say, that it is altogether equitable that he should be so, because of the Divinity of his nature, the appointment of his Father, and the merits of his sufferings. Jesus "is Lord of all,"



**1. On account of the Divinity of his nature.**

It is well known, that some maintain that our Lord Jesus Christ is but a mere man, like ourselves ; that he had no existence prior to his being born of the Virgin Mary ; and that he is the Son of God merely by office ; but we have every necessary proof from Scripture, that he is God ; for the Father has testified that he is such, saying, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:" as such the angels adore him ; his miracles attest it, and his own declarations put it beyond the possibility of a doubt. In believing that Christ is God, we have not followed cunningly devised fables ; and in asserting it, we speak forth the words of truth and soberness. And if it be so that his nature is Divine, ought he not to be acknowledged as "Lord of all?" He "is not a man that he should lie," and therefore, when he says that he and his Father are one, we must confess that the high honor conferred upon him in the text, does most properly belong to him. He is "the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts:" therefore Divine honors are most justly his due, and who are we that we should refuse to render him the honor he demands? for "he is Lord all." Let no bold blasphemer dare to murmur at the distinguished honors of the Son of God ; but let every one of us fall prostrate at his feet, saying, "My Lord, and my God !" Whilst cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, blessed are all they that put their trust in him : for he is God, and beside him there is none else ; and justly has he ordained that "they who despise him shall be lightly esteemed." He will be acknowledged as Lord of all,

**2. On account of the appointment of his Father.**

Here we must particularly regard the honor of the Saviour in his mediatorial character. Has not the Father exalted him with his own right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the remission of sins? Has he not highly exalted him, and "given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?" Jehovah has, indeed, conferred the highest possible honor upon his Son Jesus, and made his kingdom stand firm as his own eternal throne; he has glorified him with the glory that he had with him before the foundation of the world. He has passed a decree, that all men shall honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He has committed all judgment into his hands, and views him as his co-equal Son, now he appears before him in heaven. And shall we dare to question the right of the Saviour to this title, when it is given to him by God himself? The Father views his own honor and that of his Son as intimately connected. Whatever God appoints is right. The honor of the Saviour is of Divine appointment; therefore he may well say to us, "Be still, and know that I am God."

That day which shall burn as an oven, that day for which all other days were made, shall reveal to us the uncreated glories of the Saviour; till then, let us rejoice that he is, by the will of the Father, "Lord of all."

We argue the right of this honor belonging to the Saviour,

3. From the merit of his sufferings.

"For we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned

with glory and honor." The promise of God the Father to his Son Jesus was, that he should see his seed, that he should prolong his days, and that the pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; that he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied; that he should divide a portion with the great, and the spoil with the strong; that he should have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; that he should break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Verily, Jesus was made perfect through sufferings, and these expressions of his glory are the consequence of his abasement: for because he endured the cross, despising the shame, and overcame principalities and powers, therefore "He is Lord of all."

Having just glanced at the import, the truth, and the equity of the text, let us now,

IV. Point out its influence, that so we may be affected by it.

Observe, then, that it warrants in us the most ardent attachment to him; it bears an unfriendly aspect on the enemies of the cross of Christ; it teaches us all to lift up to Jesus the voice of prayer and praise; and it gives us every reason to believe, that all things will terminate in the benefit and glory of the church.

1. Our text warrants in us the most ardent attachment to the Saviour. Because it represents him as invested with every excellence, and possessed of all possible power; and whilst we have this thought, that he is the Friend of mortals, as well as "Lord of all," surely we cannot help admiring and loving him.

He has exhibited undeniable proofs of his at-

attachment to us : and shall " the Lord of all " be a " man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and we not be filled with attachment to him ? Does his life of suffering, and death of infamy, produce no effect on us ? Remember, his love to us was great indeed, was prior to ours, was from everlasting, and as unmerited as it was unsought ; and shall it meet no return ? His glory, when viewed in connexion with his regard to sinners, is enough to make every heart flow with gratitude and burn with love. Who is so proper an object of our affection as the " Lord of all ? " Whilst every thing else changes, he is the same. O, say to him, then, " Whom have we in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that we desire beside thee."

2. This subject bears an unfriendly aspect to the enemies of the cross of Christ.

For if " he is Lord of all," none can oppose him with impunity, or reject his claims, and go away unpunished. As soon as Judas's band heard him say, " I am he," they fell immediately to the ground ; and since his arm is so strong, I tremble for those who deny his Divinity, despise his atonement, laugh at the influence of his Spirit, and will not have this Man to reign over them. He never will clear these guilty characters, but has threatened them " with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power : " and as " Lord of all," he is able to execute every threat, and to perform that awful word which is gone out of his mouth. O, what will the despisers of Christ do in the day of their visitation ? How can they escape the damnation of hell ? He will soon appear as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first

and the last ; and his glories will be viewed by these very persons with astonishment and confusion of face. As no honor was ever ascribed to him by those men, no glory shall be conferred on them by him ; for he is able to cast them, both body and soul, into hell ! Let them all then bow with submission, and “ kiss the Son now, lest he be angry, and they perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.”

3. Our text teaches us all to lift up to Christ the voice of prayer and praise.

For if he be “ Lord of all,” he ought to be adored, worshipped, and had in reverence by all the creatures he has made. “ Let all the angels of God worship him,” is the high command of God himself : and whilst the angels are paying him their adoration, shall the proud mortal man refuse to do so ? It is not idolatry to worship our Jehovah Jesus, it is only rendering him the homage he deserves, requires, demands, and expects. O, Christian, recollect, that in every time of trial you have to look up to him, who “ is Lord of all,” for support : supplicate then the help of his hand, adore the wonders of his love, praise him for the assistance he has already afforded you, nor ever imagine that you can be too lavish in adoring him, who is exalted far above all blessing and praise. As “ Lord of all,” he is able to answer every petition that is put up to his throne, and will take no excuse for our neglecting to pray to him. His very nature, too, induces him to hear and answer prayer, so that this consideration ought to bring us low at his footstool, to implore of him the blessings of his grace. Had he indeed been but a man like ourselves, he could have no authority to demand our

worship ; but as he is " God over all, blessed forever," it is at the peril of any one to refuse rendering honor to him.

4. Our subject gives us every reason to believe that all things will terminate in the benefit and glory of the church :—

Because the honor of Christ and the interests of his saints are closely connected, and he cannot fail to attend to the interests of those whom he has purchased with his own blood. Amongst them peace shall be published by Jesus Christ, who " is Lord of all : " it shall be dispensed to one nation as well as to another ? he will be a wall of fire round about his saints, and the glory in the midst of them. The power, wisdom, and goodness he possesses, shall all be displayed in the behalf of the ship of which he is the Pilot, and of the family of which he is the Householder. And as he is the Head of the church, and " Lord of all," her walls shall be called " salvation, and her gates praise : " by his blessing upon her, she shall become the Zion of the Lord, the city of the Holy One of Israel ; and " the praise of the whole earth, shall she be called." Even the machinations of our enemies shall be overruled for our good, and the Divine glory shall be effectually promoted by every individual member of his family ; so greatly will he distinguish his faithful servants from an ungodly world, that he will finally receive them to himself, and place them near his throne ; where his glory shall be seen, his presence felt, his influence communicated, and his virtues sung, forever and ever : for " He is Lord of all."

Brethren, what think ye of Christ ? Is he all your salvation, and all your desire ? or, are you despising and refusing to adore him ? Is this Lord

of all, your portion, your treasure, and your hope ? or, are you yet ignorant of his glory, and destitute of his grace ?

There is one passage of Scripture which I would wish might make an impression upon your minds, and then I shall have done ; it is this : “ No man can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” Now the influences of this Spirit are essentially necessary to give Christ a throne in your heart. Has he testified of Jesus there, and taught you to say,

O that, with yonder sacred throng,  
We at his feet may fall !  
We'll join the universal song,  
And crown him “ Lord of all !”

## DISCOURSE VII.

*GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS SAINTS.*

PREACHED OCTOBER 18, 1809.

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“Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

MALACHI III. 16, 17.

It has often been remarked, and certainly with truth, that in the most abandoned ages of the world, the Lord has had a remnant according to the election of grace ; he has preserved a seed to serve him ; he has had numbers that have not bowed the knee to Baal. The chapter out of which we have read our text, gives us an account of deplorably wicked times, records the rejection of Divine ordinances, the robbery of the honor of Jehovah, and the general impiety which was chargeable upon the Jewish nation : and yet it makes honorable mention of characters whose holy zeal, and active endeavors to revive religion, should stimulate us, who hear things they never heard, and see glories their eyes never beheld, to be doubly concerned for the honor of Him, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus



Christ, that there are now many in our own land, as well as elsewhere, who are cleansed in the blood, sanctified by the Spirit, and passing to the enjoyment of the presence of Jesus Christ; and who, like the faithful worthies, whose pure religion is noticed by Malachi, and approved by Jehovah, "fear the Lord, speak often one to another, and think upon his name." Let us consider,

I. The excellences of good men which are here celebrated.

II. The approbation of them which God here testifies.

I. The excellences of good men which are here celebrated. And you will observe that they are more particularly distinguished by their holy fear of God, their pious meditation upon him, and their Christian fellowship one with another.

1. The first excellent trait which we behold in their character is, their holy fear of God.

They are said to be "they that feared the Lord." And "who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The Divine Being, brethren, claims your reverence, and "blessed are they that fear the Lord, that greatly delight in his commandments." The persons mentioned in our text were like Obadiah, who feared the Lord greatly: they were like Abraham, of whom the angel testified after his trial saying, "I know that thou fearest God:" they were like the churches mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, who "walked in the fear of the Lord:" they were like Cornelius, who was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house."

This Divine principle, far from being the produce of the barren soil of nature, must be wrought in us by the power of the Spirit; for one of the

promises of the new covenant is, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." It springs not from a sense of guilt, for this fear is cast out by Divine love ; but it induces love to Jesus, it teaches us to hate evil, it prompts to ready obedience, and it leads to the throne of God ; for where he is, there shall also his servants be.

2. These Old Testament believers were noted for their pious meditation upon God.

We are told that they "thought upon his name." Ah, how unlike those who have not God in any of their thoughts ! how unlike many, must I not say most of us, who suffer our minds to be so employed with earthly things, as to let our God, our Saviour go ! These men of God, while some trusted in chariots, and some in horses, remembered the name of the Lord : in the multitude of their thoughts within them, his comforts delighted their souls ; their meditation of him was sweet ; they were glad in the Lord, their minds were stayed upon him ; the desire of their souls was to him and to the remembrance of his name. And do you know any thing of this ? Have you ever enjoyed much of God in the secret silence of the mind ? Do you daily, hourly, in your desires and contemplations, rise to the heavenly world ? Isaac went out into the fields to meditate ; upon whom do your thoughts delight to turn ? There is enough in the name of God for contemplation : review what he is in himself, and especially what he has done for you ; frequently contemplate that work of redemption, which is to be your wonder forever and ever : think of Jesus with thoughts of affection and desire : let your minds trace his actions ; let the eye of faith behold him in glory pleading your cause ; let it penetrate the cloud that separates between

him and you ; let it realize the happy time when you shall come before him. And if these are your contemplations, the effects of them will appear ; the world will behold you as the Israelites beheld Moses when he came from the mount, with his face shining exceedingly. Your whole deportment will savor of it, and your conversation will be in heaven, from whence you look for the Saviour.

3. These men, of whom the world were not worthy, were remarkable on account of their Christian fellowship one with another.

“ They spake often one to another :” and no doubt they spake of the best things ; they considered one another, to provoke one another to love, and to good works, and so much the more as they saw the day approaching. We can imagine them saying, “ Come unto me, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul.” Methinks I hear them together reviewing the Divine dealings towards them till their hearts burn within them, while they talk to one another by the way. They were to one another what Jonathan was to David, when he strengthened his hands in God, thus proving that two are better than one. And do we not know that “ he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, whilst a companion of fools shall be destroyed ?”

How truly deserving of imitation was the conduct of Anna, the prophetess, who came into the temple when Simeon was blessing Jesus, “ and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Israel.” We see, also, fine instances of the same communicative disposition in the disciples who conversed together about Christ, and brought one another to him. So let us, then, comfort ourselves together, and edify one another, and exhort

one another daily, "looking diligently, lest any one of us fail of the grace of God."

We know that men, like Simeon and Levi, are brethren in iniquity; but "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honor, be thou not united." *They* invite one another for the worst of purposes; why should not we for the best? They say, "Come with us, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in thy lot with us, let us have one purse;" but let us turn our eyes from them to the select society of Christians, and "behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity and love." They are all loved with the same everlasting love, all united to the same precious Jesus, all travelling to the same glorious heaven: surely then those communications ought to be, must be sweet. Learn to bear one another's burdens, to pity one another's faults, to pray for one another's best interests; so shall you copy the example of the best of men, and evidence that there is no bond, in heaven or in earth, so uniting as the love of Christ, which begets, preserves, and powerfully constrains to love.

While infidelity prevailed over many in those days, yet the grace of God influenced some: the Spirit of Christ dwelt in them, the presence of Christ was enjoyed by them, even that presence which turns mourning to joy, and death to life; which cherishes our weak faith, and illuminates our dark understandings; which adds new life to fainting hearts, and would make a heaven of hell. It is our mercy, that whenever two or three are gathered together in his name, there his presence is, to chill our corruptions, and bring heaven into our souls.

Having considered the excellences of good men, which are here celebrated, let us now notice,

II. The approbation which God here testifies of them.

And, taking up the ideas of our text, we observe, that this approbation appears, in his paying kind attention to their employment, in his granting them a share in his affectionate remembrances, and in his promising to own and spare them in the day of judgment.

1. Let us see how God evidences his approbation of them, in paying kind attention to their employment : for "the Lord hearkened and heard it."

God, indeed, has searched us, and known us ; "for there is not a word in our tongues, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether !" and so vast is his notice, that "for every idle word that men speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment." But in a peculiar manner, in a gracious way, does he attend to the groanings of the prisoners, to the cries of the needy, to the conversation of fellow-pilgrims. When you, brethren, unite in inquiring, What has God wrought for our souls, for our families, for the churches to which we belong, or for the world at large ? the Lord hearkens and hears it.

With real pleasure he sees, he listens to the public testimonies you give of the excellences of his cause, for, O glorious truth ! the Lord taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. Think not that the heavens are brass against you, or that he takes no notice of your actions, for he knows and he approves the way of the righteous. What real consolation does this convey to our minds ! for though our spiritual conversation may be neglected by most, and held in the greatest contempt

by many, the Lord hearkens and hears it. As God could remonstrate with the ungodly in the days referred to in the text, so his eyes were upon the righteous, and his ears were open to their cry. Satan, your subtle and too powerful enemy, cannot, after all, prevent the approbation of your God in covenant, and your God in Christ. O, then, go forward to sing in the way to Zion : "Be of one spirit, and of one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel," and the Lord will hearken, and hear it.

2. Jehovah manifests his approbation of them, by granting them a share in his affectionate remembrance; for "a book of remembrance was written before him" for them.

"Remember me, O my God, for good," was the prayer of Nehemiah : "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom," was the petition of the dying thief; and an interest in the Divine recollection is indeed a great blessing; and great as it is, it is granted to them "that fear the Lord, and that thought upon his name." "A book of remembrance was written:" this language is metaphorical, and is used to express the particular, the abiding, the never-to-be-forgotten recollection, which God has of the honor his saints put upon him. "He tells even their wanderings, and puts their tears into his bottle; are they not in his book?" Of every thing, you, Christians, are enabled to do to the glory of his grace, it may be said, "It is written before him." The deeds of Big-thana and Teresh were written in the book of the Chronicles before king Ahasuerus, to their infamy and disgrace; but yours are inscribed by an immortal pen in the book of God's remembrance, to your joy, and the lifting up of your head.

It is evident, from the following verse, that this is one of the books which shall be opened in the day of judgment ; and do you not recollect in what approving strains " the King eternal, immortal, and invisible," speaks of the acts of his saints, as recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew's gospel ? But remember, these deeds are by no means spoken of as approved by God as meritorious ; no, but only as testimonies of their real religion, as evidences of their possessing faith, without which, none of these things could be acceptable in the sight of God ; and as proofs of their superiority to those on the left hand of the Judge.

And what are we, that God should think of us ? Say, brethren, are we not altogether unworthy of his notice ? Have we not indeed merited his wrath ? And yet he gives us every blessing, and records our names on the palms of his hands, yea, prints them on his very heart.

3. God gives an evidence of his delight in their services, by promising to own and spare them in the day of judgment. " They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I shall make up my jewels."

Yes, he accounts them his jewels ; despised as they are by men, they are chosen of God and precious. They are dear to him ; he has rendered them comely by the righteousness of his Son, and in them he magnifies his bright and glorious perfections.

There is a day coming when he will make them up ; when he shall send his angels to gather his elect from the four winds of the earth, when they shall have his name written on their foreheads in legible characters, and when Jesus shall say, " Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the

joy of your Lord." Come, subjects of my conquering grace, ever children of my love, and partakers of my Spirit, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then shall all believers, the poorest not excepted, be owned before an assembled world, be dignified with the blessings of heaven : when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory ; crowns of honor shall be placed on their heads ; palms of victory shall be held in their hands ; robes of glory shall adorn them ; and hymns of praise shall be heard from them, to the sovereign grace of Jesus : then they shall be ever with the Lord of hosts.

"And I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." They are his sons, begotten by his grace, adopted into his family, and distinguished with all the privileges of the children of God : whilst on earth, they are active for him : they love him with the affection, the zeal, and the constancy of a son ; and "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." I will spare them (as the passage may mean) till that day ; I will preserve them from every evil, to the enjoyment of myself ; they shall be kept by the mighty "power of God, through faith unto salvation." And then, when the last trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, I will spare them according to the multitude of my mercy ; since I did not spare my Son for them, I will spare them for him. "When he shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is : " grace shall be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ ; they shall find mercy of the Lord in that day ; they shall have no part in the fury of God's wrath, in the fire of hell,



which is the second death ; they shall be delivered from going down to the pit, for he has found a ransom. O then, Christian, lift up your head, for your redemption draweth nigh.

Sinner, this subject proclaims your misery ; instead of fearing God, you hate and disobey him ; instead of meditating on him, your mind is occupied on what you shall eat, what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed. You never stretch a thought half-way to God ; instead of going with others in the road to heaven, the conversation in which you mingle is sensual and devilish. Your friends are the enemies of God, and you delight to confirm one another in your opposition to Jehovah : he sees you, but it is with indignation ; he marks it down, but it is that it may appear against you another day ; you shall be consigned over to the devil ; instead of being spared, you shall be damned.

O, believer, live up to your character as delineated in the Bible ; rejoice in the prospect of eternal life ; when called to it, pass the river Jordan with a hope full of immortality, and so shall you be ever with the Lord. “ Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.” Amen.

## DISCOURSE VIII.

*LOVE TO, AND FAITH AND JOY IN AN UNSEEN CHRIST.*

PREACHED JANUARY 15, 1809.

“Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” 1 PETER, I. 8.

THE second appearance of the Son of God is an event for which every Christian, when in a proper frame of mind, ardently longs, and earnestly prays for ; it is his employment and delight, to be “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ :” it behoves him always to be hastening unto the coming of the day of God, and to hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought to him at the revelation of Jesus Christ. On that day a display will be given of the grandeur and glory of the God we worship : those dispensations which appear to us at present irreconcilable with his perfections, will then strike our admiring minds as being altogether right, yea, absolutely necessary, to accomplish his own designs, and illustrate the depths of his infinite love. “This mortal shall then put on immortality, and this corruptible be clothed with incorruption ;” a final termination will then be put to all those fiery trials, which are now sent to try us ; the Christian shall, both in the glory of his body and in the purity of his soul, resemble his Redeemer ; and, in fine, the kingdom of heaven will be opened to all believers, and a loud voice shall

proclaim, "Blessed are they that have done his commandments, for they have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in, through the gates, into the city." Since these shall be some of the grand transactions of that illustrious period, the saints cannot forbear exclaiming, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

But whilst the high expectations of the redeemed are directed towards the Saviour's second advent, it is worthy of remark, that he is not an uninteresting character to them now. Although they glory in the thought, (which is so beautifully expressed in the verse preceding our text,) of "the trial of their faith being found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," still there are present enjoyments in religion, and the believer has all good things in possession, as well as all glorious things in reversion. They have earnestly given them of the happiness of that day: and do not Christians feel an anticipation of that rapture which will then begin, when they are enabled to say, in the words of our text, which immediately follow an allusion to the day of judgment, "whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?"

From the passage then, thus introduced, we shall endeavor to show you two things: That Jesus Christ is yet invisible; that, notwithstanding this, he excites the Christian's best sensations.

I. Jesus Christ is yet invisible.

"Whom," says the apostle, "having not seen," and "in whom, though now ye see him not."

No doubt Peter here refers to a sight of Christ in the flesh: since the greater part of those to whom he wrote, had not "beheld his glory, the

glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth :” it was his design to comfort their minds, and to inform them that, although Christ lived no longer on earth, there is a possibility of enjoying the blessings of his undertaking in our own souls, and that this shall be the case till time shall end.

But the idea of Jesus being unseen, must not only be viewed in reference to those to whom the apostle wrote, but in its bearings upon us ; for the words of our text are as applicable to us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, as they were to those who lived a short time after the ascension of the Saviour. And we may contemplate our Lord Jesus Christ as invisible in two respects ; namely, in the glories of his person ; and in the mysteries of his providence. We would consider our Lord Jesus Christ as an invisible Saviour, as it respects,

1. The glories of his person.

He, my brethren, is “ that blessed and only Potentate, who alone hath immortality ; dwelling in light, to which no man can approach ; whom no man hath seen nor can see.”

Formerly, indeed, he was beheld arrayed in human nature ; and we might have addressed those who were familiar with him : “ Blessed are your eyes, for they see what many prophets and righteous men desired to see, but saw not.” But you remember that, before his resurrection, he said, “ A little while, and ye shall see me ; and again a little while, and ye shall not see me, because I go to my Father.” Now the heavens have received him out of our sight, “ till the time of the restitution of all things :” the eye of sense cannot trace his glory now ; we cannot soar to the third heav-

ens, and say to the angels of God, "Sirs, we would see Jesus;" it is impossible that his beauties should ever be viewed by mortal eyes; the sight would dazzle, would confound us. He is enclosed in a veil of glory which we cannot penetrate, appearing in the presence of God for us. A miracle must be wrought before we can discover him on earth: this was done in the case of Stephen; for when standing before the council, he, looking stedfastly into heaven, said, "Behold, I see heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God;" and the animating sight caused him to leave the world with a holy calmness, yea, to die like Jesus, imploring forgiveness for his enemies. Instances like these are, however, very rare; for, as to the state of the church in general, and as to the discharge of his mediatorial office, he is not seen of any. The high priest, you recollect, was not to be seen after his entrance into the holy place, until he returned again; so you, Christian, must live by faith, and not by sight: faith is the evidence of things not seen. And should not this consideration, namely, that ye have not seen the glory of the person of Christ, urge you, stimulate you, as a powerful motive, to run with renewed alacrity towards the mark in the road to heaven, the chief pleasure of which place will be to see him as he is? Is it not worth dying for, to contemplate his excellences? to see that glory which has been hid from ages and from generations, but which will catch the gazing eyes, and employ the eternal adoration of the saints of God forever? But till that day, when "this same Jesus, who is now taken up from us into heaven, shall so come in like manner as he went into heaven;" I say,

till then we must speak of him as one whom we have not yet seen.

But in another sense Christ is invisible, and that is,

2. In the mysteries of his providence.

We know not his designs in his dealings with us, and could we know them, yet we cannot see how his methods of acting tend to accomplish them: our blindness as creatures is one thing which prevents us from searching and finding out God, or tracing the Almighty to perfection. "His ways are in the deep, and his judgments past finding out:" he is unsearchable in all his deeds; nor man nor angel can give any account of some of his ways. His reasons are known only to himself; and it is enough for us that the Judge of all the earth will do right. What is the reason that, under afflictive dispensations of providence, when perhaps God is taking from us those comforts of which we are but stewards, we murmur, and complain, and grieve? It is because we cannot see how these things are uniting with other occurrences to promote our holiness and happiness. Here, then, Jesus is unseen, even in the designs of his mind, when he tries us in this way. We cannot sound his judgments with mortal lines, we cannot view them by feeble sense.

A believer cannot walk by sight: Jehovah has seen fit to render it impossible; yet, amidst all the storms of life, however driven upon seas of distress, it should always afford us consolation that our Father is at the helm; and that ship is well conducted, of which He is the Pilot.

Is our life a journey? It is an unseen hand that guides us, that prevents our foes from overcoming us, that shields us by night and by day

from innumerable dangers ; and it is the part of faith to rejoice that, however obscure the dealings of God are now, they will all be made clear hereafter : it shall be shown that the great chain of events most wonderfully illustrates the character and perfections of God. That wisdom which led us through every danger, that kind hand that even robbed us of our comforts for the most beneficial purposes, shall be viewed with unutterable pleasure when we are blessed with "strong immortal eyes." God will be his own interpreter, and every mystery will be made plain ; so that we shall no longer worship an invisible Saviour, but be filled with gratitude for a view of the deep things of God.

Jesus is invisible, then, as to the glories of his person, and is not now beheld by us ; and "as for his judgments, we have not known them:" but, though he is unseen by the saints, we observe,

II. That, notwithstanding this, he excites their best sensations.

This he must do, because he is their all and in all : from him all their mercies flow, in him all their happiness centres, and to him all their exertions are directed. Hence his religion engages in its service the best passions of the human soul : the finest feelings of the mind are called into exercise by Him who is yet unseen ; and particularly is the Saviour the object of strong affection, lively faith, and unutterable joy. Jesus Christ has attracted, though he is invisible,

1. Strong affection.

"Whom having not seen ye love." You have, no doubt, often heard that Jesus possesses the greatest possible excellences, that he is perfectly amiable, and altogether lovely. As God he possesses every perfection, being equal with the Fa-

ther : " In him dwells all the fulness of the God-head bodily." As man he had every thing that can adorn human nature, and make it more honorable than it was before our first parents fell ; and, as Mediator, he has every thing suitable and necessary for us men ; and for our salvation ; his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars ; it is as the sun, when he shineth forth in his strength : so that he has united in himself all human and Divine beauties. " This is our Beloved, and this is our Friend."

The saints, having discerned this, are ravished with his excellences, the flame of divine love is kindled in their souls, and they esteem it the heaven of heavens only to see his face. All the beauty of creation is deformity itself, when compared with the person of Jesus ; angels are not half so fair, nor the stars half so bright ; and, if this is the case, no wonder that he is the object of attachment to all enlightened minds. And they love him too, let it be remembered, because he first loved them ; therefore it was that he revealed himself unto them, because he had set his love upon them. The fulness of grace that is treasured up in him, the offices he sustains in the economy of their salvation, and the relations he bears to them, all endear him to their souls : hence they love him with a superior and peculiar attachment, with a love that is shed abroad in their hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit, and which is distinguished for its constant duration. All that belong to him, that bear his image, and are conformed to his lovely likeness, have a share in their affections, even for the sake of Him, who alone is worthy of the highest place in our affections : the members of his family, the truths of his gospel, the ordinan-



ces of his appointment, and the precepts of his love, are all beloved by Christians, because of their connexion with the Lord Jesus Christ, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things." They love him with all their souls, and hearts, and mind, and strength; the affection that they feel for their friends in the flesh, great as it is, and ought to be, is coldness when compared with the glowing ardor of their love to a Saviour, for whom, if called to it, they would cheerfully suffer the loss of all things, yea, rejoice and be exceeding glad that they are counted worthy to suffer for his sake. It was Divine love that animated them in the prospect, yea, in the very feeling of the flame, and that gave them joy in the most critical period, causing them to leave the world rejoicing in that everlasting attachment, the pleasing effects of which they so clearly displayed.

O, how this holy principle deadens the warmest passions to the things of time and sense! With what holy contempt it enables us to look down upon the pursuits of those, who are unacquainted with the joy of loving Jesus! and at the same time that the Christian dwells on this delightful name, the angels are surrounding him with pleasure, rejoicing to hear the name they love from a mortal tongue. He is the bright morning-star, before which all the twinkling sparks of night begin to die away. The greatness of the Godhead, and the sweetness of the creature, meet harmoniously in him. Neither the shades of the night, nor the business of the day, must hide the image of Jesus from the sight of the Christian. Yea, the company of the saints in heaven, and the brilliancy of the place, would be all nothing, if Jesus removed: the Christian would be tired of life, would long to

die, would find immortality a curse, if he were placed far from Jesus. When he is brought very near to him, even here upon earth, when glory is introduced into his soul here, he begs of God to stay his hand, for he can bear no more happiness whilst he is in the body of sin and death ; he feels the great, yet delightful, pressure of glory, and he cries, " Turn away thine eyes, for they have overcome me. The inhabitants of the heavenly world can sustain the vision ; but its joys are too intense for a mortal, the glare overcomes me. Yet love me still, and translate me whenever thou chooseth to the place where I shall behold thee with strengthened sight, and my heart shall be all love, and thou all my jòy !"

2. Jesus is the object of the saints' lively faith. " In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing."

This expression shows us the very nature of faith, or, at least its peculiar characteristic, which is, to regard invisible things ; in this way it acts upon Jesus, the Son of God, for, " Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed : " those who are regenerate and love Christ have their faith drawn towards him ; and it is not merely a notional, historical, or temporary faith, which they are enabled to exercise upon him, but a scriptural, heartfelt, and constant act. It is not merely crediting the truth of his assertions, but our text has a reference to a perpetual looking to him as the Author and Finisher of faith, a quitting self for his sake, a leaning upon him as the only Saviour, a casting our all into his hands, and an expectation of grace and glory from him ; and all this is done whilst he is unseen. Now, to make a man believe in this way to the saving of his soul,

Divine influence is essentially necessary ; it belongs to the same Spirit of faith, who taught sinners, in former days, to believe in Jesus, to work this gracious principle in our hearts at the present time.

The saints have faith now instead of vision ; but shortly their faith shall be changed for the sight of God ; and they shall be satisfied, when they awake up in the Divine likeness. The use of faith is to give them to know all this, for they believe that they shall behold him, whom now they see not ; they must exercise faith in the second appearing of Christ, because he has himself asserted its truth ; the dispensations of providence are paving a way for it, and they have in their own breasts the earnest of it, by their possession of the Holy Spirit.

This principle is, however, liable to change, it has its different degrees ; there is such a thing as little faith, and we may be strong in faith, giving glory to God : this consideration should teach us to say, with the disciples of old, " Lord, increase our faith !" Faith is always acceptable in the sight of God ; an implicit reliance upon the atonement of Jesus is the best sacrifice we can offer to the Searcher of the hearts, and Trier of the reins of the children of men : whilst, " without faith, it is impossible to please him." Great and many have been the exploits performed by it ; what wonders it did for Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and the Israelites in general ! " and what shall I more say ?"

The last sensation which we mention among those which Christ excites in the minds of his people, is,

3. Unutterable joy. " Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The covenant engagements of Jesus, his very name, his incarnation, his blood, his promises, his work, and intercession, all seem to say to us, "Rejoice evermore." They have introduced grand, solid ground for joy; and heartfelt pleasure is connected with faith and love. This is a transport that is better experienced than described; for when God lifts up the light of his countenance upon a soul, that soul has more joy than the men of the world have, when their corn, and wine, and oil increase; strangers intermeddle not with this joy, they know nothing of it, it entirely surpasses their understanding. Saints themselves cannot tell it half, they have not language to express it, they cannot convey proper views of it to others; for it is unspeakable, being excited by a participation of God's unspeakable gift; it is full of glory. There is a rejoicing in iniquity, an evil and a scandalous triumph; but the joy alluded to in our text makes the subject of it appear truly honorable in the eyes of angels, good men, and God; it is a pleasure that maketh not ashamed, that leaves no sting behind, for it is substantial; whilst "the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment, and the laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under a pot." This holy sensation, increasing more and more, is the beginning, the pledge, the presage, of eternal happiness; it is glory begun below; it is a kind of first-fruits of the new life, which we shall pluck from heavenly trees in the kingdom of glory above. The saints can tell something of the happiness of the world of spirits, by the bliss which a discovery of Divine love causes in their souls, even in the midst of the greatest calamities. Such was the rapture which Peter, James, and John felt, when in the mount of transfiguration, with the Son of

God ! and far greater will be the rapture of the glorified spirits round the throne of God and of the Lamb forever.

“ That mount, how bright, these forms how fair !  
’Tis good to dwell forever there ;  
Come death, dear envoy of my God,  
And bear me to that blest abode.”

O, let us never forget that Christ Jesus is the proper, the appointed, the only object of religious joy. Whatever the Christian rejoices in must have some connexion with him. Are the promises the matter of his rejoicing ? These were all made by him, are all ratified, “ are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.” Is it any spiritual blessing ? It comes to us only through his mediation. O, then, Christians, “ joy in God, by whom you have now received the atonement ;” “ rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ;” “ rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;” let your heavenly inheritance be the matter of your triumph, “ though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” While the rich man glories in his riches, and the mighty man in his might, do you rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven. “ Declare his works with rejoicing ; go to God your exceeding joy ; with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation ; shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart ; joy in God, the God of salvation : finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord ; rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice. So shall the Lord your God rejoice over you with singing, yea, rest in his love.”

Let me remark, by way of conclusion, that these sensations, from various causes, are not always felt ; for our love is cold, our faith dying, and our

spark of joy quenched, so that we go daily mourning. But these things out not so to be ; they indicate that religion is at a low ebb in our souls ; and if this be the case with us, we may cry, " O, my leanness ! my leanness ! " But must we not lay the blame of our little enjoyment of religion upon ourselves ? Surely we must. O that the Spirit of true faith and joy would " fill us with all joy and peace in believing ! "

Let me ask, how many of us, in the Divine presence, can appropriate the language of the text to ourselves, and say of Jesus, " Though now I see him not, I love him, I believe in him, I rejoice in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory ? "

Let me tell the sinner who has no interest in the bliss of which we have been speaking, the fearfulness of his character, and the certainty of his punishment.

O Christian, go on to glorify Him, " whom having not seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. " Amen.

## DISCOURSE IX.

*THE COMMAND ILLUSTRATED, "LAY HOLD ON  
ETERNAL LIFE."*

PREACHED MARCH 5, 1809.

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"Lay hold on eternal life." 1 TIMOTHY VI. 12.

WHAT a peculiar solemnity is there in the advice of an aged Christian to a young convert! To hear one whose hopes of a happy immortality are strong and lively, whose prospects of eternal glory are sufficient to make him long for the cold embrace of death, and look with triumph on the ghastly horrors of the tomb; to hear such a one instructing those who are just commencing their journey to heaven, is truly affecting, because we know that, at such a time, the most important truths will drop from his lips; and hard indeed, must be the heart of that man, who can think of them without an awe upon his mind, without a determination to fulfil the best wishes of a dying friend. So Moses addressed the children of Israel, just before he died in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. So Jesus, when "his hour was not yet come," discoursed with his disciples, and cheered their minds, who experienced the sorrow of disappointed expectations and terminating friendship. And so such a one as Paul the aged, gives the kindest and best advice to Timo-

thy, his "own son in the gospel," while he shortly after presents him with his own situation and the feelings of his own mind, saying, "For I am ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand."

One of his last exhortations to Timothy, before his rapt spirit was borne to God, was, "Lay hold on eternal life;" and permit me to say, that obedience to this injunction is as all-important to us, as it was to the young evangelist to whom it was addressed. I intend, then, to offer a few thoughts upon the object presented to our view; and the exhortation concerning it.

I. The object presented to our view—eternal life.

By this expression, the happiness of the heavenly world is evidently intended; and when it is called eternal life, we are not merely to understand that it will have no termination, that there will be no more death; but we are taught that every thing that can render life desirable or delightful, will be there enjoyed without interruption, and in rich abundance, so that God's people will be eternally satisfied with his goodness. It is impossible for me to describe to you eternal life, or to tell half the glory which is felt in that happy land from whence no traveller returns. Had I, like Paul, been "caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words," and seen its inconceivable excellence, I could not, even then, tell it you; there are "glories which it is not lawful to utter;" eye has not seen it, ear has not heard it, the heart of man cannot conceive it; the tongue of Gabriel, the favorite angel, could not describe it; yea, nothing short of the full possession of it, can give us an adequate idea of its excellence. Hear



what you may of eternal life, and conceive of it to the utmost stretch of your powers, when you arrive at the threshold of heaven, you will exclaim with the astonished queen of Sheba, "The half has not been told me!"

All we can do is, to form some ideas of it, from the views under which it is represented in the Divine word; and lest we should darken counsel by words without knowledge, we shall deduce our observations upon eternal life from that unerring source; and we remark, for the sake of distinction, it especially includes in it, a perpetual enjoyment of Divine favor, Divine knowledge, and the Divine presence.

Eternal life comprehends

1. A constant enjoyment of the Divine favor. This idea is founded upon the following passage in the Psalms, "His anger endureth but for a moment; in his favor is life." As the favor of God runs through the believer's natural life, and is the source and support of his spiritual life, there is no doubt that it will be the felicity of his eternal life. Forever, brethren, will believers rejoice that it was through the free favor, and unmerited grace of God, that they arrived at the kingdom of glory: the song of the redeemed is, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the praise." They will acknowledge, in devout exclamations, that they owe all their purity to Him that loved them, all their conquests to Him that died for them, and all their happiness to Him that rose again, and thus "begot them again unto a lively hope." The favorable smiles of God, too, will delight them forever and ever; they shall be approved by him, and acceptable in his sight through the mediation of the Son of his love.

That must be eternal life, which embraces the complete enjoyment of the lifting up of Jehovah's countenance, and the everlasting smiles of a covenant God. Even now, the consciousness of interest in the benevolence of the God of the whole earth, puts more joy into the mind of a Christian, than the men of the world receive "when their corn, and their wine, and their oil increase;" but what will be their pleasures when they arrive at the shores of that peaceful land, where doubts and fears are known no more, but the full assurance of Divine favor is enjoyed forever and ever.

2. Eternal life includes Divine knowledge.

This is evident from these words, "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent:" and this knowledge is eternal life; not only as it prepares us for the enjoyment of it, but as it contributes the very essence of its felicity and joy. "Whoso findeth wisdom findeth life." O, "take fast hold of instruction, let her not go, for she is thy life." In heaven "we shall know even as we are known." Our ideas of God will be clear and consistent, our eternal life will be a life of intelligence, and the Divine character will unfold and open to us a wide field for active inquiry and diligent research. Hence we may well be so anxious to inquire in God's temple, to be perpetually making new discoveries, under the teachings of God himself, of his own character and dispensations, and to be learning the manifold wisdom of God forever and ever. Thus shall we eternally possess an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we shall be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. And who amongst us all, that knows any thing of the Saviour, would not wish to know

more, and to see more of his excellent greatness through the countless ages of eternity? Lord Bacon would say, "Knowledge is power." But the Bible gives us to see that true knowledge is life, is nothing short of eternal life.

3. The last ingredient in our eternal happiness, that we mention at this time, is the Divine presence.

Jesus Christ is, indeed, the life of his people now, his ordinances delight their minds, and his spiritual presence removes all thoughts of solitude: but hereafter their "eyes shall see the King in his beauty, even in the land that is yet afar off." It is the principal part of the glory of the inhabitants of the new heaven above, that the Lord God shall dwell amongst them; thus they behold his beauties, and have him as their kind companion forever and ever. Innumerable passages of scripture that represent Christ as the life of his people, suggest the idea, that his presence, his constant presence, makes eternal life. And what a glorious life is this; existence and complete felicity unite in the land of Canaan above! Judge, if you can, what a redeemed soul experiences the moment it enters into the midst of the heavenly city; and think too highly, if you can, of that most wonderful of all subjects, "eternal life."

Having thus briefly reflected on the object presented to our view, let us now turn our attention,

II. To the exhortation concerning it. "Lay hold on it."

We may lay hold on eternal life by embracing the gospel which reveals it,—by believing on Jesus who bestows it,—by relying on the promises which ensure it,—and by pressing towards the full enjoyment of it.

1. Lay hold on eternal life, by embracing the gospel which reveals it.

In what a benighted state was the world before the diffusion of the gospel ! what vague, uncertain, and confused ideas were entertained by the most enlightened men of that day, of a future state ! all was wild conjecture and mere speculation. Hence arose the absolute necessity of a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Israel ; the need of a day-star to visit us, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. For this the gospel was inspired, and to accomplish this it is evidently calculated ; for by the gospel our Lord Jesus " hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light." The Bible, brethren, discovers eternal life. This mystery is concealed in the gospel of Jesus from carnal eyes, whilst it is revealed unto babes. Hence appears the superiority of the gospel to the volume of creation : " The heavens" indeed " declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work ;" but " the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple ; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart ; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." The gospel reveals a heaven to come ; shows us that by nature we have no title or claim to it ; and teaches us where it may be found. Hence it is called the word of life. O, what a treasure is contained within the covers of the Bible ! This is the field where the Pearl of great price is hid, and eternal life is brought to view. And shall this gospel be neglected by you ? rather bid farewell to every other system, call it vanity and lies, and bind the gospel to your heart. Where the truth is received in the love of it, where the

gospel is esteemed as invaluable, and that kind epistle which assures us of pardon and glory, is not only perceived there, but actually believed and embraced ; there eternal life is laid hold of.

2. Lay hold on eternal life, by believing on Jesus who bestows it.

“ This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life ; he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” “ The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Christ, is the only medium through which this blessing can be communicated to us, as is evident from the language of the glorified themselves, who are now singing that song which no man can learn but the redeemed. We shall be eternally indebted to Christ for our felicity ; then lay hold on eternal life by faith in him ; let it not appear that there is “ none of us that stirreth up himself to lay hold on God.” O, take hold on God’s “ strength, that you may be at peace with him, and you shall be at peace with him.”

If Jesus is the life of the Christian, and the very sum and substance of eternal glory, and heaven the enjoyment of him, how concerned should we be to apprehend him by faith ! Jacob laid hold on eternal life when he wrestled with the man Jesus till the break of day, and said, “ I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” The church laid hold on eternal life, when she said of Jesus, “ I held him, and would not let him go, till I had brought him to my mother’s house.” Simeon had hold on eternal life when he took Jesus in his arms and blessed him. The afflicted woman in the gospel had hold on eternal life, when she said, “ If I

touch but the hem of his garment, I shall be whole." Go ye, then, and do likewise. Believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God, and because he lives, ye shall live also ; yea, as long as he exists shall you remain in the mount of glory ; for your faith itself shall prove that a union subsists between himself and you, more intimate and inseparable than that which subsists between the firm foundation and the stately edifice, the fruitful vine and the living branch, the influential head and the active members.

Faith in Christ, and eternal life, are always inseparably connected in the word of God. O, may they be so in our experience, that the "abundant grace may, through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God."

3. Lay hold on eternal life, by relying on the promises that insure it.

You are to spend your days "in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Eternal life is the grand, the best promise contained in the Scriptures ; it is that to which all the rest are subordinate. O, then, live by faith upon the promises, so shall you lay hold on eternal life.

Who were they "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, concerning whom God swore in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest?" They were those who believed not. "So we see that they could not enter in, because of unbelief." And unbelief will ever be a barrier to our possession of the heavenly Canaan, for it is a virtual rejection of God himself. The accomplishment of the promises of God is certain ; why, then, will ye not enjoy those blessings which are so intimately

connected with a firm expectation of that eternal life, with which the promises of God are fraught ?

Lay hold of eternal life in the promise : your Father's legacy, Christians, secures it for you ; read with pleasure your title to it, and look upon yourselves as " no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Rejoice in the security of your claim to eternal life, dwell upon it with pleasure, and this thought will cheer the rugged path of life, and reconcile you to your present condition.

" Seize the kind promise while it waits,  
And march to Zion's heavenly gates ;  
Believe, and take the promised rest,  
Obey, and be forever blest."

4. Lay hold on eternal life, by pressing toward the full enjoyment of it.

This appears to be the principal idea of the text ; for in the expression there is an allusion to the active exertions of racers to gain the prize. " We are not to count ourselves to have apprehended ; but this one thing we are to do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." You are not laying hold on eternal life if you rest satisfied with present attainments, and are inactive in religion. You should daily become more and more animated in your pursuit of the prize, by faith's view of its glory. If the famous Carthaginian general, Hannibal, could inspire his troops with so much courage, by a prospect of the fertile plains of Italy, from the barren Alps, over which they were passing, how much more courageous should Christians become,

by a prospect of that glory which Christ exhibits to their view, and promises in his word !

You can have no better proof of sincerity than that which will be afforded by constant exertion ; you are only safe in this way. O that the Holy Spirit may enable you to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset you : and to run with patience the race set before you, looking unto Jesus" as your example, who, in obtaining our redemption, persevered through difficulties, even to the end.

To excite you to such conduct as I have been recommending, I might mention the two motives subjoined in the verse whence our text is taken : to lay hold on eternal life, namely,—as the end of your calling,—and the language of your own profession. This is the end of your calling : "Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called." We are called, brethren, to glory and honor ; but as preparatory to our possession of it, we are called to warfare and unwearied exertion in the Divine life. This is the language of your own profession : "Lay hold on eternal life, whereof thou hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." When you entered on the cause of Christ, you engaged yourself by a solemn pledge to "war a good warfare." The vows of God are upon you ; O, then, lay hold on eternal life ; if you do not, you belie your own profession, and give those of us who behold you, reason to suspect that you have no part or lot in the matter.

By way of inference, I would remark,—

1. Of how many things may a man lay hold, and yet come short of eternal life. You may amass riches, till they take to themselves wings and fly away : you may pursue your own gratification, and



prove yourself "a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God," till your delights are exchanged for insufferable torments : you may have a large share of honor, till that puff of noisy breath gives place to indelible infamy, and everlasting confusion of face : you may fill a conspicuous station in the church of Christ, till the Master of assemblies declares you to be one of those whom he never knew. All these things, and many more, may be possessed by you on earth, and yet you may "fail of the grace of God," and see eternal life, as Balaam said he should see Christ, afar off. O, then, be concerned to let your treasure be in heaven, that your heart may be there also. Again,

2. How essentially necessary is the influence of God's Spirit, and grace, to enable us to possess so vast a treasure and hold so invaluable a possession. "Heaven," may one say, "is too great a prize for me to seize:" so it is, if you are possessed of mere mortal power ; but, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," is language which becomes the most weak and humble Christian. True it is, that unless we are "strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man," the hand of faith will become palsied so that we shall not be able to lay hold on eternal life ; but if the same glorious Being who says, "Stretch forth thy hand," at the same time gives us power to apprehend the blessing, we may rejoice that heaven, and all its glory properly and inalienably belong to us.

Men and brethren, suffer the word of exhortation : those of you who have yet never heard the heavenly voice of wisdom, nor entered the society of believers, let me faithfully tell you, that you are daily making the wrath of God, which is the

second death, more and more certain; you are advancing rapidly to hell, the mouth of which is open to receive you. Ah! you may wish to lay hold on eternal life, when it will for ever shrink from your touch.

Oh, let those of us who have a good hope through grace, endure unto the end, so shall we be saved: let us persevere, in hope of understanding more of the heights, and depths, and breadths, and lengths of this subject in the kingdom of glory.

To all of you, sinners or saints, professors or profane, young or old, I would say, The voice of God's ministers, of dying friends, of opening graves, of the Holy Scriptures, and of Jehovah himself, is "LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE."

## DISCOURSE X.

*THE RAINBOW OF THE NEW COVENANT.*

PREACHED MARCH 19, 1809.

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“And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.”

REVELATION IV. 3.

AMIDST the chequered scenes of life, the insignificance of the pursuits in which mankind, in general, are engaged, and the prospects of mortality and death, which must sometimes strike our minds, it is the privilege and happiness of the real Christian to look beyond the grave; to summon all the powers of his mind to contemplate the glories of a future world; to bid farewell to earth; and inspect, yea, anticipate for himself, the happiness of the glorified in heaven. The vanity of the creature is made use of as an impulse to drive him elsewhere to seek for solid joy; and finding that beneath the skies there is no proper satisfaction for the vast desires of an immortal soul, he looks beyond; above them he soars within the veil; beholds his ever-loving Saviour scattering the best of blessings on all the happy tribes; hears them recounting the wonders of his grace; and feels that animation in his mind which the sight of the joys of heaven evermore inspires.

O, my brethren, let us aim to do this: the things of time and sense have engaged by far too much of our attention through the week; on

God's own day, then, let us rise "to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven:" let us, in spirit at least, join "the spirits of the just made perfect," in their admiration of Jesus, in the homage which they pay him.

The highly-favored apostle John shows, in the chapter before us, how, in vision, a door was opened in heaven, and a voice calling him, promised to show him things that must be hereafter; immediately, he says, he was in the Spirit; his mind was supernaturally impressed with those ideas which he had to reveal to us. The objects which he beheld must not be thought by us to have a real existence in the world of spirits, for the language is altogether metaphorical; and we are presented with hieroglyphics, the meaning of which may be developed, and will instruct us much in our views of the kingdom. Like Paul, then, not knowing whether he was "in the body or out of the body," in his own apprehension, he was admitted into the presence of God, and he was favored with a vision of a glorious throne, on which sat One whom it was utterly impossible for him fully to describe: for glory, to look upon, he was like a jasper and a sardine stone; the throne itself, however, was surrounded by a phenomenon, which may well attract our notice at this time; for, says our text, "There was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

You ask, what this rainbow is? The bow which God set in the clouds after the flood, was a token of the covenant he had made with man, that he would never destroy the earth any more by water; and there is no doubt, brethren, that the rainbow spoken of in my text, is the better covenant, the

covenant of grace, far exceeding any other covenant whatever. The manner in which a rainbow illustrates this well-ordered covenant, and the several other ideas of it contained in our text, will now come under our notice; and let us, my brethren, all earnestly pray, that the God of creation, providence, and grace, would give us to see how one part of his works illustrates another; and how they all show forth his eternal power and Godhead, while they are calculated to excite our admiration, joy, and praise.

Permit me, then, my friends, to ask you,

I. Is the rainbow a reflection of the rays of the sun upon a thin watery cloud? The covenant of grace owes all its excellences to Jesus Christ, the "Sun of righteousness."

That beautiful appearance in nature, the rainbow, is never seen but when the sun shines, and is evidently formed by a refraction of his rays on a watery cloud. It has often been asked, whether there was an appearance of this kind before the general deluge: it seems most likely that there was not; and, therefore, the rainbow is a more certain proof of the truth of the Divine promise than it otherwise would be. Every disposition of a rainy cloud will not produce a rainbow; and it is asked, Who knows, but before the flood, the God of creation might have so arranged the clouds that they should not form any? but be it how it may, it is evident, the sun is the cause of the rainbow's beautiful appearance.

So, brethren, in that covenant which the rainbow represents, Jesus, our Sun, is all in all. Did he not submit to all the conditions of this covenant, and appear before his Father, as ready to lay down his life for his sheep? Yes, brethren, he

declared his determination "to fulfil the law, and make it honorable, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness." The whole administration of this covenant was committed into his hands; he is the Surety, the Trustee of it; all the blessings of it are lodged in his hands. So also is he the Testator of this covenant; for he, in the promises of his gospel, has bequeathed all these mercies to us, sinful men: as an Intercessor, he pleads for us, and obtains the full possession of all those favors; yea, in his offices he reveals and applies them to our hearts. There would never have been any covenant of grace at all, if it had not been for Jesus: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to him be glory for ever and ever." No wonder, then, that he is represented to us, in another part of this book, as having a rainbow upon his head; for the covenant of grace is his, and we must give him all the glory of its existence, stability, and blessings. On this account it is that we must crown him with honor; and through eternity we shall be praising him for the weight of sufferings that he endured, as its condition; for his Divine perfections which he has displayed in it; for his administering its rich mercies to us on earth, and causing them to flow uninterruptedly into our souls for ever and ever. The covenant of grace is a reflection of the glory of the Sun of righteousness, and owes all its beauty to him: therefore, whenever we look upon the rainbow, let it serve to remind us of the covenant made with Jesus; and thus let us "look from nature up to nature's God."

II. Are our minds struck with the diversified colors of this beautiful phenomenon in nature? Let them remind us of the numerous blessings

which are treasured up in the everlasting covenant. —The beauty of the rainbow consists in its various and well-disposed colors; and, O, what a grand variety of blessings is there in the covenant of grace! What clusters, what heaps, what numbers of favors are contained here! Blessings for time and for eternity; temporal and spiritual good; our election, calling, justification, sanctification, comfort, righteousness, possession of the Spirit in all his influences and operations, and the security of eternal glory, are all covenant mercies; hence, you know, they are called “the sure mercies of David.” Yea, the believer may look upon the food he eats, the raiment he wears, the air he breathes, and all the common blessings of life, as tokens of covenant-love, and sanctified to him as much through the mediation of Jesus, as his everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. O, with what distinguishing privileges is this covenant fraught for all the chosen seed! The blessings of the saints are numerous: “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

There is nothing that the child of God can possibly want, but is secured to him here. The blessings that proceed from infinite wisdom, infinite power, and infinite love, are promised to the true Israelites; their God “will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” On account of this covenant, all things are for our advantage; whether the world, or “life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are ours, for we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” Upper and nether spring blessings are secured to us here; support under trouble, calmness in the prospect of death, a lively

hope at the very moment of nature's dissolution, an open acquittal before an assemblage of all worlds, and a triumphant admission into the society of the blest, are all included in this rainbow. "There is none like the God of his saints, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy them. Israel, thou shalt dwell in safety alone; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine, also his heavens shall drop down dew! Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency: and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places." These blessings, then, form the various colors in the bow "round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

III. Was the rainbow an emblem of peace, between God and man, after the flood? The covenant of grace declares reconciliation, and secures the redeemed for ever from the deep waters of affliction, which had often before overwhelmed them.

That the rainbow is to be regarded by us as a security against another universal deluge, is evident from God's language to Noah immediately after the flood: "I do set," says he, "my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh: and the



bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." The covenant of grace, brethren, reconciles man unto God ; it is the source of all scriptural and Divine peace ; indeed, its character is, that it is the covenant of peace. Through its influence we shall " dwell in quiet habitations and sure resting places " for ever. Yea, God, giving his own account of it, says, " For this is as the waters of Noah unto me ; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." This rainbow, then, that surrounds the throne of God, is a sign that the happiness of the saints shall be no more interrupted, that they shall be no longer subject to the inundations of trouble of any kind : seas of tribulation, and floods of distress, shall be known no more ; the former things will be passed away. Here, indeed, they were liable to torrents of temptations, to persecutions, to famine, to sword, and nakedness ; but, over all these things they shall be " more than conquerors through Him that loved them." And the bright rainbow will make known to them the designs of God ; will show them their unfading felicity. Jesus, their Sun, shall display his beams of glory, and thus gild the clouds with the most beauteous rays : the saints of God then will have to be thankful for so peaceful a sign, when suns and stars shall be extinguished for ever. Deluges of

woe shall never overspread the city of our God, which is the New Jerusalem : there, there shall be no more pain, no more iniquity, no more death. Violence shall no more be heard in that land, wasting and destruction within its borders : the heavenly inhabitants " shall hunger no more, nor thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; but the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Remember then, Christians, that for all this you are indebted to the free grace of God, and that it is all secured to you in the covenant of grace. It is because your names are enrolled in the record of the skies, because you are given into the hands of Christ by the Father, that heaven and all its glory will be revealed to your view, and possessed by you for ever and ever. O, with what delight will you survey this significant bow ! what rapture will fill your minds under the pleasing idea, that the wild dismaying scenes of life are over for ever ; and that, instead of anarchy and confusion, the Prince of peace reigns, dispensing quietness and assurance for ever ! The wearied spirit will weep no more, but will wear an eternal smile of joy, since its communication with its God will be without interruption, and its holy pleasures without an end.

" O may I bear some humble part  
In that immortal song ;  
Wonder and joy shall tune my heart,  
And love command my tongue."

IV. Is the rainbow said to be round about the throne of God ? The covenant of grace includes in it, and glorifies all the Persons in the Trinity, and is ever in their sight and remembrance.

Our text says, "There was a rainbow round about the throne;" the throne of God is inclosed in it: so the covenant of which we speak, interested the whole Deity; the powers of the Eternal Mind were engaged in the salvation of poor and miserable sinners; and herein he thus displayed and harmonized all his perfections. What wisdom there was in devising a scheme like this, which could never have entered into the mind of any but The Eternal! What goodness, what power, in putting it into full execution! and what faithfulness in consummating the scheme of human redemption! Not one of the adorable Persons in the Trinity but was engaged in this covenant: the agreement was peculiarly entered into between the Father and the Son; and the Holy Spirit brings home all the blessings of this covenant to the consciences of sinners; he applies the work of Jesus to our hearts, and herein glorifies abundantly all that the Father and the Son had done before.

More of God too, let it be remarked, in his character and designs, is developed to us by the covenant of grace, than could otherwise ever have been known, and by this covenant a revenue of glory will redound to his own great name.

And if this rainbow is round about the throne, it must be always in the sight of God; he beholds it, and is well pleased for his righteousness' sake. Amidst our backslidings, a sight of the rainbow caused our covenant God to say, "For a little moment I hid my face from thee, but with everlasting mercies, will I gather thee." It is our mercy that he cannot be unmindful of his covenant, and that, because "he is of one mind, and none can turn him;" and never can he cease to be mindful of

the welfare of those whom he chose out of the world, and whose names are continually before him.

This rainbow, will be before him for ever and ever. He will delight in his covenant; it will never repent him that he saved sinners: with complacency will he behold the glorified spirits of his saints, who will be enjoying more largely than ever they had done before, the distinguishing favors of the covenant of grace: being made thus "accepted in the Beloved," he will bless them with the smile of approbation, and the lifting up of the light of his countenance.

V. Are we informed that the rainbow was in sight "like unto an emerald," green, beautiful, and durable? How delightful to contemplate and enjoy the blessings of the covenant of grace! It is always new, and lasting as the throne which it surrounds.

An emerald is a precious stone, next in hardness to the ruby, and its green color much refreshes and strengthens the sight. The rainbow of the new covenant then, is like unto an emerald. What beauties meet in it! what order! how admirable to consider its nature and institution! and is it not like that faith which apprehends it? like the promises with which it is fraught, exceedingly precious? David of old could testify its value to his mind amidst domestic trials, saying, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

This covenant may animate us in the greatest depressions; it may cast a lustre upon the dark

dispensations of Providence, because it teaches us that they will all end well. A knowledge of an interest in it disarms death of its terrors, yea, bids him lay our ruin in the grave; seeing that death and hell combined cannot interrupt the repose of a saint in the bosom of his covenant God. No emerald is so beautiful, so precious, so refreshing, as this rainbow; this covenant claims the last accents of our poor faltering tongues, and will employ the first notes of our celestial harmony.

It is also more durable than an emerald: hard and lasting as precious stones may appear, they are mouldering dust and perishing atoms when compared with the designs of God. This is styled an everlasting covenant; it endures as long as its Author; the blessings of it are enjoyed through the unnumbered ages of eternity: it was first entered into, never to be broken, and it will remain immutable. This rainbow will surround the throne of God, as long as God will have a throne for it to surround; for, "Hath he spoken, and will he not do it? hath he commanded, and shall it not stand fast?"

"My God, the covenant of thy love  
Abides for ever sure;  
And in its matchless grace I find  
My happiness secure."

"The Lord loveth judgment, hates robbery for burnt-offering, will direct our work in truth, and has made an everlasting covenant with us:" so that "all that see us shall take knowledge of us, that we are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."

By way of inference,

Let believers always be mindful of this covenant. Since God has done so much for you, can

you let his favours be buried in unthankfulness, and die without praise? Shall it be said of you, "They remembered not his holy covenant?" Shall this bright rainbow display its beauties all in vain for you? O! let it be the ground of your triumph, the foundation of your prayers for yourselves and others, and let it always influence you to be joining yourself to the Lord in perpetual acts of self-dedication, in "an everlasting covenant that shall never be forgotten. Nor be discouraged that you are at present perplexed with trials and difficulties; but evermore boast that the rainbow still is nigh, and that it as much secures your admission into heaven, as it prevents any storm or deluges there. This covenant is a proper subject for investigation: in it lies a mine for you to dig in; it contains pearls of great price, such as will well repay your labour, and delight your soul. View yourselves as redeemed by the blood of the covenant, and rejoice that you shall admire it for ever and ever.

The sinner should think of this subject with the greatest awe; for God says to him, "What hast thou to do that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?" Not interested in it, you cannot share its blessings.

This subject points out the necessity of self-examination.

Shall we ever behold the glory of this rainbow? be ever enclosed in it? If it be the case,

"Then will he pour salvation down,  
And we shall render praise;  
We the dear people of his love,  
And he our God of grace."

## DISCOURSE XI.

*JESUS CHRIST BEARS THE GLORY OF THE WORK OF  
REDEMPTION.*

PREACHED JUNE 4, 1809.

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“And he shall bear the glory.” ZECARIAH VI. 13.

“Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man?” It is spoken, brethren, of Him who is “clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and whose name is called the Word of God.” Whilst the second temple was erecting, the voice of the prophet Zechariah was directed by the Spirit’s inspiration to that glorious building which this but prefigured. Divinely directed, he adorned Joshua with crowns of silver and gold, and was commanded to behold him as a type of the man whose name is “The Branch,” who was to grow up out of his place, and who alone was appointed, and about to build the temple of the Lord, and who is well described in the words I have read you as a text, as having all possible power, for “He shall bear the glory.”

These words intimate, that all the honor of the erection, preservation, and completion of the spiritual temple, properly and solely belongs to Jesus; they show us, that the whole glory of our salvation, from first to last, must be ascribed to him; and they lead us to view him as having on his head many crowns. God forbid that this should

be an unprofitable subject for our meditation at this time.

We may remark, then, that all blessing, and glory, and might, dominion and power, must be ascribed to Christ, in opposition to the idea of any praise belonging to man : since his hands laid the foundation and raised the superstructure of this edifice, the honor belongs not unto us, but unto his venerable and adored name. Neither Zerubabel nor Joshua were to be looked upon as the prime causes of the erection of this temple at Jerusalem ; for it might well be said of it, " This is the finger of God ! " And surely the kingdom of universal nature, the fulness of Almighty power, and the whole glory of our salvation, must alone be ascribed to the Man whose name is " The Branch." Indeed, no others could bear the glory but himself ; it would be a weight too heavy for them, and a burden intolerable to sustain ; but " the government shall be upon his shoulders : " since " of him, and through him, and to him, are all things ; to him be glory for ever and ever."

Permit me, then, to call your attention to the different ways in which Jesus is glorified, on account of his mediatorial work ; and to view him as receiving abundant honor from both the other Divine Persons in the Trinity,—from the plaudits of the angelic world,—from the ministry of the gospel,—from the conduct of all his saints,—from the dispensations of his own providence,—and from the acclamations of the glorified spirits in heaven.

Our text is true, which declares that Jesus shall bear the glory, because he has borne it, and still is abundantly honored and glorified,



I. By both the other Divine Persons in the Trinity.

That "there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and that these Three are One," is explicitly taught in the pages of inspiration, which are true and faithful. Being one in essence and dignity, they also unite in glorifying each other, and by the different offices which they have been pleased graciously to discharge in the economy of our redemption, they show us that the "Lord our God is one Lord." The Saviour of Sinners, the Second Person in the Trinity, always delighted when on earth in glorifying the Father, by discharging his will, fulfilling his law, and reflecting his honor in all his perfections; as well did he make honorable mention of the Holy Spirit, in his diversified operations upon the human mind, and intimated that his own work would be incomplete, without the work of the Holy Spirit. And shall not both the Father and the Spirit unite in causing him to "bear the glory," who had so wonderfully glorified them on earth? God the Father has "glorified his Son, with the glory which he had with him before the world began;" and he has done this by acknowledging, accepting, and exalting him.

He acknowledged him, as the Man that was his Fellow, as his Servant whom he upheld, his Elect in whom his soul delighted. He testified of him, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." He never test him without witness of his entire and hearty approbation of himself, and of the work in which he was engaged. Of no other did he ever say, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;" and again, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall

be to me a Son." The voice from the excellent glory recommends only Jesus as the Saviour of the ends of the earth.

Again, he accepted him, and thus made him to "bear the glory." He received him into the highest honours, when he had by himself purged our sins; he looked for no more than what Jesus had accomplished, and could not but admire his finished work; yea, he was "well pleased for his righteousness' sake." The Lord smelled a sweet savour from his oblation and death, and smiled with Divine benignity upon his victorious Son, in whose work he rejoiced, as it was the frustration of hellish schemes, the effect of heavenly counsels, the fulfilment of inspired prophecies, the glorification of Divine attributes, and the salvation of immortal souls.

The Father glorified him too, for he has exalted him. "He has set him on his own right hand, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come." We speak of Him "whom God raised from the dead, and gave him glory." "Wherefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." He has placed him far beyond the reach of his enemies; and vowed, that upon himself shall his crown flourish. The Father's exaltation of his Son shows us, that he has glorified him above all his name, while it teaches us to sue for the blessings he has appointed him in that state to bestow.

But the Holy Spirit also comes forward to place honors upon his head, and to "anoint him with the oil of gladness above his fellows." "He," said Jesus himself, "shall glorify me, for he shall

take of mine, and shall show it unto you." He glorifies him, then, by witnessing of his person, as being lovely and amiable, adorned with every grace, and shining more illustriously than the sun in his strength. He testifies too of his work, as being suitable and complete, as it is essentially necessary for the salvation of our souls. It is the office of the Spirit to direct the eye of the mind to him, taking it away from every other refuge. So also does he glorify him, by witnessing of his fullness, for the supply of all our wants; he leads us to him for every thing we need, and teaches us to cry to him mightily for spiritual blessings. Thus do both the Father and Holy Spirit unite in giving glory to the Son. O, how true is the text, then, which says, "He shall bear the glory!"

Let us now view him as honored and glorified,

II. By the engagements of the angelic world.

Of angels we know but little; suffice it to say, that they are superior to man in the scale of being, as they are invested with strength of intellect and activity of mind, which we do not possess; and remember, especially, that whatever they are in their nature, their employment is to glorify that same Jesus who "is all our salvation and all our desire." They promote his honor, and cause him to "bear the glory," as they constantly adore him, and as they invariably execute his will.

Observe, he is glorified by angels, because,

1. They constantly adore him.

"Let all the angels of God worship him," is the mandate which they have to obey; and as he is the Lord of angels, they readily offer him that homage which a sight of his glories evermore inspires. For Him, brethren, "the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy."

Those active intelligences can exclaim, "Worthy the Lamb;" though they cannot add, "He was slain for us." At his feet they cast their crowns; before his glory they veil their faces with their wings; to him they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." He "bears the glory," too, because,

2. The angels invariably execute his will.

They are ministers of his, and do his pleasure; commissioned by him, they wait on his saints, witness their devotions, preserve them from danger; and watch affectionately over them till they arrive at glory. From Jesus it is, brethren, that they receive their orders: to one he says, "Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh." He is the Captain of this host of the Lord. He marshals them; they are altogether in subordination to his will, and with pleasure they fly through his vast empire to fulfil his orders. And whilst they do all this, are they not glorifying him? Are they not crowning him with honor and glory? The highest archangel glories in the thought of being a servant of Jesus of Nazareth. The angels of God may all be heard to say, "He shall bear the glory."

We remark once more, that the Saviour of sinners receives a revenue of glory and honor,

III. From the ministry of the gospel.

This promotes his glory by revealing, exalting, and applying him to the heart.

1. The gospel reveals the Saviour. True it is, that he needs only to be seen to be adored and loved; and it is the excellency of the Bible, that it exhibits Christ, holds him up as the only Saviour, and presents him to our view in almost every page. In fact, every part of the Bible should be viewed

in its bearing upon him : he is the substance of the promises, the prophecies, the types, the narratives, and the epistles. By testifying of him in this way, the gospel glorifies him ; and every faithful minister is enabled to say to him, " If I forget thee, O Jesus, let my right hand forget her cunning ; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the, roof of my mouth." The gospel glorifies Christ,

2. By exalting him.

Oh, in what high terms does it speak of Jesus ! what figures, what metaphors, what language it employs, to set forth " his eternal power and Godhead," his rich grace, and his wonderful love ! Who is so highly spoken of in the ministry of reconciliation as Jesus Christ, who " shall bear the glory ?" Here he is styled " Lord of all," " King of kings," " The image of the invisible God," yea, " All and in all." The writers of the Scriptures seem at a loss for words to communicate their ideas of his infinite glory, and seem sensible that they can but lisp out a few broken expressions to his honour and praise. Every leaf of this book seems to say to us, " He shall bear the glory." The gospel glorifies him further, as it is the means, in the hands of the Spirit,

3. Of applying him to the conscience.

When this gospel is viewed, as it is indeed and in truth, the word of God, and not of man, then Christ Jesus is all the confidence and boast of the sinner. By its influence the sinner's eyes are enlightened to behold his glory ; his prejudices are removed, so that he contemplates him " as the Son of God with power." His will, which before resisted, and would not submit to the righteousness of God, is so subdued, the bias of it is so

turned, that he desires earnestly and humbly to be saved in God's own way. In short, through the instrumentality of the gospel, Christ Jesus is formed in his heart, "the hope of glory;" and so is he abundantly honored.

Thus, you see, that the grand design of the gospel, in its inspiration and diffusion, is to recommend and glorify the Saviour, and promote his praise, who alone shall build the temple of the Lord.

Once more, Jesus shall bear an exceeding weight of glory.

IV. From the conduct of all his saints. "They shall hang upon him all the glory of his Father's house." The saints honor him when they believe on him, imitate him, obey him, and suffer for him.

They testify his honor when they believe on him to life everlasting. A poor sinner is enabled to put honor upon Jesus, by simply taking him at his word, and relying on him for life and salvation. Yea, we are bold to remark, that this is the best way to glorify him; that by faith we honor his attributes and perfections, and cause a revenue of praise to be rendered to his own great name; and, "whoso offereth praise," we know, "glorifieth him, and to him will he show the salvation of God." He that believes, honors the plenitude of his redemption; the riches of his grace, the efficacy of his blood; and this is a glory which he alone shall bear, neither "is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Further, Christians glorify the Saviour when they make him a model for their imitation; when they endeavor so to walk even as he also walked; to mark the footsteps that he trod; to be holy as

he was holy ; and to evidence the same mind that was also in him. Hereby they honor the holiness of his nature, and the rectitude of his life : in his service below he must ever have the pre-eminence. You are not called to be like heroes, philosophers, or politicians, but to be conformed to the image of the Son ; so shall he " bear the glory."

You will honor him, then, by " obeying from the heart, that form of sound words which he has delivered unto you." " His commandments are not grievous ;" then let them be your study, your delight, your path in which you shall go. " If ye love me," says he, " keep my commandments : " nor is there any better evidence of strong attachment to his person, than prompt and steady obedience to his precepts. In your different spheres of action, in all your engagements and pursuits, in your intercourse with the world, as well as with the saints, never forget you are bound to glorify the Saviour, and to put honor upon his name, by living not to yourself, but to him that loved you, that died for you, and rose again.

Nor should you forget, that you must glorify him by all that you endure. Here I am reminded of the remarkable testimony that is borne of the sickness of Lazarus, of which it is said, that " his sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." By your patient submission to the Divine will, by your earnest desire that your afflictions may be sanctified, and by your preparedness for glory, you honor his love, his goodness, and his grace.

Christians are to live only to the glory of Jesus ; they are bound to promote his honor, in all their thoughts, words, and actions. And we know

that their death promotes his glory ; so that he is honored in them, " whether by life or by death." And in that great day, " for which all other days were made," he shall come to be " admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe." The noble army of martyrs praise him ; the goodly fellowship of the apostles praise him ; the whole church, throughout all the world, doth acknowledge him as God's honorable, true, and only Son. Once more, " He shall bear the glory,"

V. From the dispensations of his own providence.

" All his works praise him." His great design, in governing all things, is to secure to himself abundant glory. It is evident that the " government is upon his shoulders ;" that without his permission not a sparrow falls to the ground ; and that " by him it is that kings reign, and princes decree justice." In all the events, then, of a providential nature, that have taken place in the world, Jesus Christ is honored ; but he is especially so, in the guidance and direction of the saints to Zion's holy hill. They are, indeed, the children of Providence, peculiar favorites of Heaven ; and no wonder that Jesus glorifies himself on their behalf. Do you ask, what in him does providence glorify ? I answer, much every way. It glorifies all his attributes and perfections ; but peculiarly does it honor his power, his wisdom, and his goodness. The power of his arm is herein abundantly displayed, seeing we are led to understand that there is nothing which he cannot accomplish ; that there is no work too hard for him ; that he can very easily tread a monarch down, or dash a world to pieces ; he can " raise the poor from the dunghill, and set them among princes ;" he effects whatever



he chooses : and does not all this glorify him ? especially when we recollect that he produces all things by a word, or by the mere volition of his own mind. Yea, very often for this cause doth he raise men up, that he may show his power in them. His peculiar providence glorifies also his wisdom, which appears in his causing all things to work together for good. Every pin of his tabernacle is, indeed, in its proper place : there is not a trial borne by a Christian, but is absolutely necessary for him. At the day of judgment, when the dispensations of his providence shall be unravelled, we shall see him to be the only wise God, and trace that inimitable skill, which had been displayed in the construction and government of the world. These things also glorify his goodness, which is over all, and his tender mercies, which are over all his works. Every thing he does is done well ; and what we know not of his dealings now, we shall know hereafter. O, then, speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power ; make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom ; “ for his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations : ” all his providential dealings say, “ He shall bear the glory.”

We remark, that Jesus will receive abundant glory,

VI. From the acclamations of the glorified spirits in heaven.

That Christ Jesus is the theme of heaven is abundantly evident, from the representations given us in the word of God of the employments and songs of those who appear before God in the new Jerusalem. It is Jesus' name that sounds so melodiously upon their harps ; it is his love which ex-

cites their triumphant praise ; it is his unrivalled, uncreated beauty, which strikes them with admiration, and fills them with delight. Jesus must be considered as greatly honored by their acclamations, if we recollect, that they are unquestionably sincere, united, uninterrupted, and eternal.

" He bears the glory " of their triumphs, for their homage is sincere. Here, indeed, men profess to know him, but in works deny him ; with their mouths they acknowledge him, but by their conduct they betray him ; they " call him Lord, Lord, but do not the things which he says : " and suppose ye, for a moment, that Christ owns himself honored by such characters ? I tell you nay ; but he will appoint them a portion with hypocrites and unbelievers. But the language of a glorified soul is the expression of its pious feelings ; there is no formality in worship there, nor is there any hypocrisy or deceit, for the former things are passed away. Whilst they exclaim, " Worthy is the Lamb," they feel that he is exalted above all blessing and praise. Jehovah himself, who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men, testifies of them, that they are Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. Amidst all the numbers of the blood-bought throng, there is not an individual but feels his obligations to the grace of Jesus ; and who, when he pronounces his charming name, does not glow with sincere affection towards him. He himself knows, then, that he alone bears the glory of their praises ; because, when they adore him, their hearts are not wandering after other good.

Large is the revenue of glory which Christ receives from the spirits of the just made perfect, because their adorations are united. In praising him they all agree ; not one refuses to join the song,

not one wishes it to close. Jesus himself is the delightful bond of union to them all; they are all united in Christ. Those that were redeemed from different tribes, and tongues, and people: that were called by grace at different periods of their existence; that were separated from each other, when on earth, by different sentiments, or by other once existing circumstances; now all join in one common hallelujah, and in one loud amen. The Saviour has the satisfaction of finding himself to be the joy and wonder of them all, for "He shall bear the glory."

Their acclamations, too, will be uninterrupted. They will honor him then, not with frail, but with incorruptible bodies: they will never feel languor or weariness; being so glorified, that every thing in their constitution, when on earth, which was calculated to impede their devotions, and to control their holy pleasures, shall be known no more. Wandering thoughts, cold affections, and earthly desires, shall not break in upon their solemnities, or cause them any more to render an unacceptable sacrifice, or to present to Jehovah the blind and the lame. And there, too, "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." How great, then, must be the honor which they will present to the Saviour, if it were only from the consideration that it will be uninterrupted!

He will also bear surprising glory, because the acclamations of his redeemed will be eternal. As they see fresh wonders in him, they will present to him fresh praise and new honor; they will not grow weary of adoring the name of Jesus; but whilst unnumbered ages pass along, they will adore him, and cause him to "bear the glory." For ever and ever will they adore his wisdom in conducting

the affairs of his church, his triumph in completing that spiritual temple ; and while immortality endures, all their harps, and all their songs, will be employed in praising Jesus, the God of Zion.

Let me tell those who do not love to praise the Saviour now, that they are totally unfit to join the grand assembly above, and that they cannot be admitted into heaven, till they have higher thoughts of Jesus Christ, and lower thoughts of themselves : yea, till they are divinely taught to hate sin, and live here with that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord." Let me beg of the obstinate sinner, for his own sake, not to go on insulting this lovely, this glorious Redeemer, because he certainly will slay his enemies, with the sharp two-edged sword that goes out of his mouth ; he will "consume them with the brightness of his coming." Let me excite you all to join in praising Jesus ; your obligations to him, Christian, are infinite : diffuse then the savour of his name in every place ; ascribe to him the kingdom, the power, and the glory ; say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Blessed be his glorious name for ever ; and "let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

## DISCOURSE XII.

*THE WILFUL OBSTINACY OF IMPENITENT SINNERS.*

PREACHED JULY 30, 1809.

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“As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee.”\* JEREMIAH XLIV. 16.

UNDER Johanan, the son of Kareah, the Jews fled into the land of Egypt, contrary to the exhortations of the prophet Jeremiah, and dwelt in the country of Pathros. When they were there, he delivered his own soul of their blood, by faithfully setting before them their idolatry and impenitence, and clearly prophesying their utter destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: declaring to them, that God would take this remnant of Judah, who had set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and cause them all to be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; that they should even be “consumed by the sword, and by the famine; and that they should be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.”

You are, perhaps, ready to suppose, that when the mourning prophet had delivered this heavy burden of the word of the Lord, they, like the inhabitants of Nineveh, clothed themselves in sack-

\* During the vacation, Mr. Spencer preached at Dorking: on closing his labors there, he repeated all the passages from which he had preached, and then announced this text.—*Ed.*

cloth and ashes, and cried mightily, saying, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" No such sentiments pervaded their minds; no such expressions dropped from their lips; and judge what hard hearts they must have possessed, when you hear that our text contains their impudent reply to the word of God by his servant. "For all the men and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. "But," say they, "we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth out of our own mouth;" and then they acquaint him with their decided determination to pursue their idolatrous and impious course, notwithstanding all that the prophets of the Lord could say against it. And since the unrenewed heart is still hard and impenitent; since the will of man, by nature, is obstinate and perverse: and since the love of sin predominates in the hearts of the unregenerate; mankind frequently pay no better attention to the messages of the heralds of salvation, than these deluded Jews did to the warnings of Jeremiah. Faithful ministers are frequently obliged to return to their closets with an aching heart, under the idea that many are saying in their hearts, and by their conduct, "As for the words which thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee." These words, then, lead me to show,—that it devolves upon ministers to address sinners in the name of the Lord,—and to point out the unpleasant reception with which their message often meets.

I. We will show, that it devolves on ministers to speak to sinners in the name of the Lord.

These impious Jews, in our text, mention the word which Jeremiah had spoken to them in the name of the Lord. We said, that it devolved on ministers to speak to sinners in the name of the Lord. Yes, brethren, to sinners. Foolish, and inconsistent with the tenor of Scripture and apostolic preaching, is the idea, that the people of God only are to be addressed from that awful place called a pulpit. The messengers of Christ have to alarm, exhort, and reprove: their embassy is calculated to interest those who are in the "gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," as well as those who have believed through grace. The watchman upon the walls of Zion are to endeavor to dissuade those who are without, from living and dying ignorant of the way of salvation, as well as to tell the church that "her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, and that she shall receive of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Those ministers who are held as stars in God's right hand, lead men to avoid the blackness of darkness for ever, as well as guide our feet into the way of peace.

We find that the prophets addressed the vilest of men: the voice of Wisdom itself is directed to the foolish, and those who have no understanding. John the Baptist calls upon those whom he terms a generation of vipers, to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Jesus Christ himself expostulates with, and exhorts, and weeps over sinners. To sinners the apostles preached, whose danger affected their hearts, and excited their earnest prayers; so that no wonder they cried, "Why will ye die?" and, "Ye fools, when will

ye be wise?" Ministers of the present day, endowed, we hope, with the same spirit, and inspired with the same sentiments, adopt the same conduct, and cry aloud, not sparing, but earnestly addressing those, to many of whom (awful thought!) they are the "savor of death unto death."

To sinners they have particularly to declare the mischief occasioned by sin. They represent to them their deplorable situation; they describe to them the horrors of the pit wherein there is no water, in which they lie; the miseries of that prison in which they are closely confined; the unprofitableness of the drudgery in which they are engaged; and the tribulation and anguish which they have to expect. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, they persuade men;" and sensible that, if they are unfaithful, the blood of souls will be required at their hands, they are "instant in season and out of season," if by any means they could persuade them to flee from the wrath to come. Hence, to sinners they have to exhibit the compassion of the Saviour; to them they cry, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation:" they are earnest in exhorting such to flee to the Saviour's open arms, and to apply instantly to Him who never casts out those who come to him. They tell them, that the Saviour's "heart is made of tenderness, and that his bowels melt with love." The servants of Christ say continually, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price;" and they direct them to Him who hath said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

The ungodly part of a congregation must never consider themselves as uninterested in the truths



of the gospel ; for, like the Jews at Pathros, they can call the message of their minister, when they address him, "The word which thou hast spoken to us."

But what we wish you particularly to notice is, that they do all this in the name of the Lord. They speak in the name of the Lord ; for they speak in obedience to his command. They remember that the Head of the church, the Governor of Zion, and the Owner of the golden candlesticks, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." They recollect, too, that when the blessed and holy Trinity cried, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" they replied, "Here am I, send me." They call to mind a period, when they, led by the providence of God, devoted their talents and their lives to him, and conferred not with flesh and blood. Do they not then, when the path of duty is made so abundantly plain to them, speak in the name of the Lord ? Jehovah calls them his prophets, his servants ; (for he is never ashamed of those who, in an abandoned age, show to men the way of salvation ;) and says to them, "Be not afraid of their faces, for I am with thee to deliver thee."

They speak in the name of the Lord, too, because they speak in perfect agreement with the Divine word.

"To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The ministers of the gospel have to declare among the churches, the "manifold wisdom of God ;" and "this is the word, which, by the gospel, is preached unto you." No minister can be said to speak in the name of the Lord, who does not make Jesus

Christ, who is the subject of the Scriptures, the sum and substance of his ministry ; or who does not view the Bible as the unerring test of truth, and never-failing fountain of light and life. Faithful ministers speak in the name of the Lord ; for they are chosen vessels, and they go their ways to bear his name unto the Gentiles. The authority of Heaven is stamped upon all they say, when they speak, as led by the Spirit of truth into the truth contained in the Bible. They speak to sinners in the name of the Lord also, because they address them in a firm dependence on his Spirit. This Spirit shall direct them in their studies, shall give the enjoyment of the gospel in their own souls, and shall animate their hearts, by taking of the things of Jesus, and showing them unto them. This Spirit they depend on for illumination, for power, and for success ; and if they have so Divine a teacher, and derive help from so blessed and exalted a source, do they not speak in the name of the Lord ? Because God pours out his Spirit upon them, therefore it is that they prophesy ; and because the power of the Highest overshadows them, their words are often “ quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow ;” their tongues are like the pens of ready writers ; and their own souls rejoice within them, when they testify the glorious majesty of Jesus’ kingdom.

Do they not speak in the name of the Lord, lastly, since they preach in the hope of promoting his glory ?

From a sincere desire to honor him, they ought ever to dispense his glorious gospel ; nor have we any reason to think that a man preaches in the

name of the Lord, who preaches himself, and not Jesus Christ. If the motives of the company of preachers are right ones, they are to glorify God by debasing the sinner, exalting the Saviour, and aiming to promote holiness of heart and life. If these are their aims, brethren, they speak to you in the name of the Most High God. And well may they ask, "Who is sufficient for these things?" The faithful ministers of Christ can say, "We are not as many who corrupt the word, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, so speak we in Christ." It is a work that might fill the heart of an angel, and has occupied the hands of the Saviour. When I consider what it is to speak in the name of the Lord, I tremble for myself, I tremble for my brethren, but, most of all, I tremble for those time-servers, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God, and do not "commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

Having endeavoured, then, to show you that the ministers of the gospel, like Jeremiah, speak to sinners in the name of the Lord; I would now,

II. Point out the unpleasant reception with which their message often meets. Their hearers say to them, "As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee."

We hope that there are but few who would plainly say this in words; who are so hardened as to glory in their shame; or so incorrigible as to tell God's ministers that they cast his words behind their back, as unworthy of attention, and beneath their notice: yet we are persuaded, that there are many professors who say this in their

hearts, and who will not see when the hand of God is lifted up : for if this were not the case, would ministers so often have to lament over them, saying, " O that they were wise ;" and, " O that there were such a heart in them, to keep his commandments and do them ?" To show that there are many, who in their hearts say, " As for the word that thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee," let us inquire, whether mankind, in general, hear the word of God attentively, believingly, and obediently.

Many there are, who seem to say, We will not hearken unto thee attentively. God has written to these characters the great things of his law, and they account them strange things ; hence his ministers have to address " a disobedient and gain-saying people." Are there not some of you who never think of engaging the powers of your mind to hear the word of God ; who think his service long and tiresome, and say, " When will the Sabbath be over, that we may set forth wheat ;" who think so lightly of God's ordinances, as to come in late, and disturb the worship of others ; or who, as if you wished us to believe that you have no couch at home, make God's house of prayer a place of repose, and the time of worship an opportunity to indulge in sleep ? Careless hearers, then, all say, " We will not hearken unto thee." And O, how few are there that will hear believingly ! The word does not profit, " not being mixed with faith in them that hear it ;" men often " reject the counsel of God against themselves," and disbelieve the record that God has given of his Son. Their conduct shows that they believe not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. There are

many hearers of the gospel who view the atonement of Christ as unnecessary, the evil of sin as greatly exaggerated, the influences of the Spirit as nothing but enthusiasm, and the doctrines of original sin and imputed righteousness as cunningly-devised fables. To such we would say, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Jesus Christ is set forth crucified among you; but "this is your condemnation, that light is come into the world, but you love darkness rather than light, because your deeds are evil." Nor will they hear obediently. For there are many who profess to admire the truths of the gospel, but do not the things which his servants say: their temper is not reformed; they are as idolatrously covetous as ever; not one single alteration is produced in them by the gospel. God says to one of his ministers concerning them, "And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not: with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." Thus, they do not hear, so that their souls may live; and their minister is obliged to say to them, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you labor in vain;" and he is confirmed in his suspicions, by their rooted self-righteousness and unabated love of the world.

They really seem to have formed the resolution contained in my text, and to say, "We will not hear thee." They have "made a covenant with their eyes, to behold nothing but vanity;" with their ears, to refuse to listen to "the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely;" and with their hearts, never to "receive the engrafted word of

truth, which is able to save the soul." And let me ask, Why is all this? What is the reason that they will not attend to those things, which, it is evident, belong to their peace? I firmly believe, that the reason why they say, "As for the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee," is, because they are in league with sin, and what ministers teach loudly speaks their condemnation. It is, we remark,

1. Because they are in league with sin.

This is what you love, sinner; and therefore you cannot bear to hear it represented as an evil and a bitter thing. What your ministers represent as amiable and lovely, is diametrically opposite to your carnal taste; and being, like these impudent Jews at Pathros, determined to fulfil the desires of your own heart's lusts, you refuse him that speaketh on earth by the authority of Heaven. You hear, perhaps, without much regret, the holy name of the Lord continually blasphemed: you hear, with satisfaction, any thing else but the things pertaining to God and to his church. Because the works of darkness are your delight, you "set at nought all his counsel, and will have none of his reproof." You scorn the messages of his grace; despise one of his servants after another; and your hearts say of Jesus, whom the Father sent, saying, "They will reverence my Son," "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the vineyard shall be ours."

It is sin that hardens your heart against the impressions which the gospel should make upon you; it is sin that shuts your eyes against this heavenly light. It is Satan who teaches you to say, "As for the words which thou hast spoken to us in the

name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee." You say so, too, because,

2. What your ministers preach loudly speaks your condemnation.

No debtor more unwillingly looks into his books, which show him the extent of his arrears, than you examine your own hearts, when your consciences are roused to attend to the words of the law of God, as repeated by the ministers of the sanctuary. Ahab, the king of Israel, as a striking instance of this : you remember, that when Jehoshaphat asked him, if there was not another prophet of the Lord of whom they might inquire ; he replied, " There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord ; but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

See here then, sinners, the reason why you will not hearken to your ministers. You know that they show you your own truly awful characters ; they tell the exceeding sinfulness of your lives, and present to you the terrors of the Lord. They must prophesy evil concerning you, whilst you continue in your present state ; for, living and dying unconcerned about the word, they tell you in the name of the Lord, that all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon you, and " God shall blot your name out of the book of life forever."

Two or three remarks shall close the present discourse. I would say, by way of inference, In what an awful state are those persons who are making the resolution contained in the text. They are evidently exposed to the loss of their privileges ; to hardness of heart, and contempt of God's word and commandments ; and to utter and eter-

nal destruction. For "if he escaped not, that despised Moses' law, but died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who (by rejecting the gospel) tramples under foot the Son of God, and counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing?" "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "Hear, and your soul shall live." The voice of God demands attention. Listen to the Friend of sinners, as he speaks in his word, and great advantages will result: so shall it appear that the word has not fallen by the way-side, upon a rock, or among thorns, but upon good ground.

How blessed are they to whom faith cometh by hearing!

What reason have they to be thankful for the preaching of the gospel, and the news of salvation! What prejudices it has opposed! what ignorance it has enlightened! what consolation it has afforded! and what blessings it has diffused! Live, then, as those who have received the gospel. And now, brethren, "I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."



## DISCOURSE XIII.

*GOD THE DEFENCE AND GLORY OF HIS CHURCH.*

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 3, 1809.

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“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.” *ISAIAH xxxiii. 20.*

It is probable, that when this prophecy was delivered, the city of Jerusalem was threatened with an immediate siege; but Jehovah engages to defend it from the attacks of its enemies, the Assyrians, and to render it at once quiet and secure: but yet the text which I have read to you, appears to have a direct reference to the privileges and stability of the gospel church; for Jerusalem, after this period was never long preserved from hostile invasions, therefore our attention is turned from it, to that glorious city against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. We shall, therefore, without any further introduction, proceed to take those views of the church of Christ which our text recommends, and enforce that attention to it which it demands. Let us,

I. Take those views of the church of Christ which our text recommends.

And we are led to regard it in a threefold point of view: as a solemn city, as a quiet habitation, and as an immoveable tabernacle.

We have the church of Christ represented to us,

1. As a solemn city. "Look upon Zion," says my text, "the city of our solemnities."

The church of the Lord on earth is called "the holy people;" "the redeemed of the Lord;" "sought out; a city not forsaken." It is "that great city, the holy Jerusalem." It is "Mount Zion, the city of the living God." It is "the holy city, which is the mother of us all." The orders and laws necessary for the city of Zion are contained in these lively oracles, which may also be considered as the charter of the privileges of its happy and active citizens. Peace is within its walls, and prosperity within its palaces; and every thing is conducted well, being managed by him who is the God of order, and not of confusion. Its great King ever dwells in the midst of it, and its walls are continually before him. The immunities, for which its inhabitants are distinguished, are numerous and inestimable; including deliverance from the bondage of corruption and sin, together with a full enjoyment of a right to the tree of life, and to all the blessings they can need: these they obtain by pleading the name, blood, and righteousness of Jesus, the King's Son. Watchmen are set upon its walls, to assure the citizens that their iniquity is pardoned, and that their sin is covered; as well as to promise a sanctuary to the weary and distressed, who yet remain without the gate.

Its "walls are called salvation, and its gates praise;" its streets are all pleasant, and its towers may well strike the eye with admiration. We, however, briefly sum up its excellences, when we say, that it is "the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." But we particularly wish

to notice the solemnities for which this city is distinguished : it is well called in my text, " the city of our solemnities." This name may be applied to Jerusalem, on account of the most solemn feasts that were there made ; the solemn assemblies that were there held ; and the solemn sacrifices which were there offered. Nor is the term at all inapplicable to the church of God, which consists of serious believers, who enter into the most solemn engagements with Jehovah ; who are employed in the most solemn exercises of mind that can possibly be imagined ; and whose minds are peculiarly affected with the solemnities of death and judgment.

Real religion, brethren, is altogether a solemn thing : its exercises are abused, when they are not entered upon and pursued with real devotion of heart. Nothing trifling can be viewed with approbation by the Father of the spirits of all flesh.

O that when we entered the church of God, we were more impressed with the idea, that it is " the city of our solemnities ;" then would our levities be checked, our minds be prepared for the devout service of God, and he would, indeed, " cleanse the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit." In the church of God, we are called solemnly to give ourselves up to him, saying, " Lord, I am thine : here we are, with all seriousness, to aim to promote the best interests of our immortal souls ; here we are, with reverence and godly fear, to offer the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit." Never look upon Zion, then, without remembering, that there the most solemn transactions pass between God and the soul.

2. Our text views the church of God as a quiet habitation : " Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation."

It is "builded together for an habitation of God, through the Spirit;" for he hath "chosen the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion, which he loved: and he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which he hath established forever." God himself is the householder, for he hath chosen Zion, and desired it for his habitation: and here, too, dwell all the faithful. There is something very consolatory in the idea, that all the worthies now in glory, that ever trusted in Christ, were all members of that church which is one; and that all real believers are considered by Jehovah as forming a part of it, as united in Christ. It is a habitation that incloses all real believers, by whatever name they may be called amongst men, and however far they may be separated from each other on the wide earth, or wider seas: they are, in a spiritual sense, all lodged under the same roof, and all inhabit the house of God, whose house are we. This dwelling-place of the just, then, is remarkable for the security which is there enjoyed, and the peace which pervades the whole. It is "a quiet habitation;" here the Prince of peace takes up his residence, and dwells, and reigns: here "the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever;" and God's people dwell here in a peaceable habitation, and in "sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." Those who reside in this habitation need not be afraid of evil tidings, but should rather have their hearts fixed, trusting in the Lord, and thus be quiet from fear of evil. Peace is the legacy which the Saviour left to all the members of his family; and it is promoted in and among us by the benign influences of the sacred Dove. Blessed then are the people that are in such a case; yea,

thrice blessed are they whose dwelling is Mount Zion. What a happiness it would be, if those of us who profess to be Christians, evidenced more of that pure affection to each other, which is "like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments!"

3. The church is described as an immoveable tabernacle. "A tabernacle," says my text, "that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken."

The church of Christ may here be described as a tabernacle, in opposition to the superior glories of the New Jerusalem in heaven; for it is true, that the church militant is but a tabernacle, when contrasted with the inconceivable excellences of the paradise of God. Divine glory is manifested to us, and known by us here, but in part; but there "we shall know even as we are known." There are grand discoveries reserved for us in heaven, and church-privileges laid up for the redeemed ones in the house not made with hands. As a tabernacle, brethren, the church of God may often change its place. This is shown us by the state of those cities in which once the cause of our Redeemer prospered, but where now his name is never heard. Here, Asia, I cannot but think of thee; for I behold the glory which once distinguished thy solemn assemblies, now shining in the churches of the saints in the British isles. Yes, brethren, though the place of the church militant may be changed, its situation altered, yet its privileges can never be taken away, nor can its stability be ever shaken, or its duration ever cease: for, "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so

the Lord is round about them that fear him," to show himself strong on their behalf. The Jerusalem church, though it might verify the promise in the text, by experiencing a long space of peace, and season of rest from war, together with the restoration and continuance of their sacred privileges, has now lost all its excellence, and Ichabod (the glory is departed) may evidently be seen inscribed upon it. The true church typified by it, the tabernacle referred to in our text, shall never be taken down whilst the world itself remains. A seed to serve him is secured to the Redeemer, as the reward of the travail of his soul, and a generation to call him blessed shall never be wanted whilst he is called Head of the church. The promises of the covenant, which declare that Zion cannot be removed, but abideth forever, confirmed by the invaluable blood of Christ, and the ordinances and institutions of his gospel, never can be shaken whilst they rest not only on the authority, but on the preserving power of Christ. These are things which cannot be shaken; and we may even rejoice, that, notwithstanding the rage of a hostile world, or of the enemy Satan, still the church's foundations are in the holy hills; the Highest himself shall continue to establish it; and to the end of time it shall be said of this and that man, that they were born there.

Having endeavored then to place before you the church of God, as described in the text, I would now,

II. Enforce that attention to it which it demands.

My text says to all, "Look upon Zion." Here I may say,

1. Look upon it, angels, with complacency and delight.

We know that your exalted minds rejoiced at the idea of the erection of this temple of God ; you saw the plan and admired it ; nor less were you struck with amazement at the great grace which the blessed and holy Trinity displayed in putting it into execution. You have, with pleasure, often beheld our Jesus, from time to time, taking men, "one of a city, and two of a family, and bringing them to Zion." Still, then, let its increasing honor be the subject of your investigation ; surround its walls night and day ; and minister for good to all its individual members : but ye need no exhortations from mortals on a subject like this ; we know that you, with desire and praise, still look upon it ; and this moment I hear you all unite in saying, "Zion is a place which we all desire to look into." Then leaving the angelic host to gaze upon the Zion of God, we would say,

2. Look upon it, sinners, with astonishment and desire.

To you who know not God, I would address myself, and say, "Look upon Zion ;" behold real Christians, in the union they experience, and in the temple where they worship, and remember that Zion stands, though you have endeavored to oppose it. Look upon Zion, sinner, and there you will see the arm of the Lord exerted in the success of a cause which you seem determined to oppose. Look upon Zion, and recollect, that though you have often said, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us," yet the Lord holds you in derision ; and that your attempts against his cause are feeble and vain, and that your hope of success is an idle dream. But we

would excite you to look upon Zion, that you may long to join its holy society, and unite in the solemn vows that are therein paid to the mighty Maker of heaven and earth. Can you behold its order, happiness, and joy, and not feel a wish that you might exchange the dissatisfaction and the melancholy you often experience, for the good of God's chosen, and the felicity of his heritage? Do not you think that "it will be an honor to appear as one new born and nourished here?" Go then, and express your wish to the great Head of the church, that he would "write the name of the Lord on your foreheads," and invest you with the privileges of the inhabitants of Zion. Again:

3. Look upon it, Christians, with wonder, love, and praise.

Of all characters in the world, it behoves you to "walk about Zion, and go round about her, to tell the towers thereof, to mark well her bulwarks, and consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following." Surely, as you reside in it, you ought ever to admire it, and call it "the city of your solemnities," a place to which you are no strangers, but which is the place you have chosen to dwell in. O, let your eyes ever see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. Gaze on it with pure affection towards all your fellow-citizens: you shall be blessed if you love Zion. Look on it then as the lot of your inheritance, and the place in which your soul delights; and ever praise, magnify, and bless Him who constituted it what it is, who made you to dwell in so quiet a habitation, so secure a resting-place: be it your glory to be joined to the saints, and near to the Saviour.

All of us, in the presence of God, should look upon Zion; should contemplate the solemnity, the



peace, and stability of the church; and this will inspire us with contempt of the world. For what is the world and all the glory thereof, compared with Zion, "the city of our solemnities?" Our worship is serious: they are fools, who never raise their thoughts above the ground they tread on; they sport now, but their laughter will be turned into sorrow, and their pleasure into the bitterest pain. All around them is serious, but they are without consideration, and consequently without hope. We have "a quiet habitation;" but "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The church of God is secure; they are exposed to every evil in this world, and in that which is to come. Looking upon Zion, too, will direct our attention to its great Original. It will teach us to ask, Who formed all this? And thus from Zion our thoughts will pass to Zion's God, and our meditation upon him shall be sweet, yea, we will be glad in the Lord. Looking upon Zion will show us God's chief work; for here he is seen, and here he is great in Israel; so that we shall be led to rest in him, whose workmanship we are.

I have already anticipated the idea, that looking upon Zion will also fill us with desire to be inclosed within its walls. For who can look upon it without suing for a residence in it, if the saints are so quiet from fear of evil, and so secure, notwithstanding the number, power, and situation of their enemies? A child of God, must be a name better than that of sons or daughters: who can survey it without saying, Lord, bring me, keep me there?

And, finally, looking upon Zion will tend to strengthen our confidence and faith. For we shall say, If God has already defended his church so

long, he will continue to do so ; will be “ a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it ;” yea, will raise the members of the church militant to the glories of the church triumphant. O, then, “ turn away your eyes from beholding vanity,” and “ look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities ; see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down ; not one of whose stakes shall ever be removed, not one of whose cords shall ever be broken.”

## DISCOURSE XIV.

*CHRIST THE ANGEL WHO GUIDES HIS CHURCH.*

PREACHED SEPTEMBER 10, 1809.

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“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.”

EXODUS XXIII. 20.

At the period when these words were spoken, the children of Israel were about to leave Sinai, and proceed on their journey towards the land of Canaan. The Sovereign, Judge, and Lawgiver of his saints, had already given them plain directions for the regulation of their conduct, and now encourages them by a promise of the care of infinite love, and by an assurance that he would commission an angel to go before them, to keep them in the way, and to bring them to the place which he had prepared.

And who was this angel? certainly not a created one: true indeed it is, that the whole host of angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation;” and that it is their perpetual employment and delight to guard the saints of God from danger, or to “bear them up in their hands, lest at any time they dash their feet against a stone.” It is most evident, that the sons of God, the children of the light, those who are Abraham’s seed, and heirs accord-

ing to the promise, are the objects of their peculiar charge ; yea, the angels of God are powerful guardians, to whose care we are partly committed during the time of our minority, previous to our possession of our heavenly inheritance. Yet it is not one of these who is referred to in our text, because this great and mighty Messenger from heaven possesses more honors than they can claim, and is invested with authority and power which they could never hold. This Angel has God's name in him ; this Angel can forgive sins, for the next verse to my text says, " Provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions." This Angel was ever to be present with them, and to conduct them safely to the land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey. See, then, his superiority to those who, notwithstanding the powers they possess, are but the creatures of God. You ask, Who is this Angel ? It must be evident that he is a Divine person, if it were only from this consideration,—that he pardons transgressions ; for, as the Jews justly asked, " Who can forgive sins but God ?" But surely you have frequently heard and read of the Angel of the covenant ; and you remember Him that dwelt in the bush. It is far more than probable, that this Angel, then, is no less a person than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is that Angel of whom dying Jacob testified, that he had redeemed him from all evil, and whose presence and blessing he wished ever to accompany the lads, upon whose heads he laid his hands. We know that he attended the children of Israel, for " the Angel of his presence saved them : in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." It is the same that wrestled

with Jacob ; that kept the burning bush unconsumed ; that did wonders before Manoah and his wife ; that struck the admiring eyes of Daniel ; and that explained the mystery of the vision to Zechariah : and so here he engages to keep God's chosen ones in their way, and to bring them to the place which he had prepared.

The glories of the Saviour are the same in every age ; he being subject to no change, but subsisting, as " the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Every thing that may be of use to lead us to his glory and excellence, should be the subject of our contemplation and delight ; nor should we refuse to take any view of him, which the Bible warrants, or commands : wherefore, let us turn our attention to him as the Angel of the Lord. He still performs for his church what he accomplished for Israel ; for the Lord has given him for " a Leader and Commander to the people ;" yea, he is " our God forever and ever, and our Guide even unto death : " so that we may safely view him as conducting his chosen tribes through duties, dangers, and trials, till they all appear before him in Zion. Let us, then, first view the Lord Jesus under the representation of an Angel ; and secondly, contemplate that office mentioned in our text, for the discharge of which he is so eminently qualified.

We will endeavor,

I. To view the Lord Jesus Christ under the representation of an Angel.

" Behold," says God, to those who have turned their backs upon the world, and go in quest of a happier state, " Behold, I send an Angel before thee." We would observe here, that it is utterly impossible fully to represent his excellence, either

by this or any other allusion ; but the idea of an angel may serve to show us somewhat, at least, of His loveliness, of whom we hope to be learning forever and ever.

From the language of Scripture we are led to connect an idea of personal glory with that of an angel ; we read of men being astonished at the brightness of their appearance ; and, by several other expressions to the same intent, are led to conceive of their superiority to man in point of form and comeliness ; this may at least remind us of the beauty and heavenliness of the person of Christ. This Angel of the Lord is, indeed, "fairer than the children of men ; grace is poured into his lips, and God hath blessed him forever." Glory and majesty ever characterize him : nor is it any wonder, that when the beloved disciple had a view of him, he fell at his feet as dead. No tongue can tell, nor heart conceive, nor imagination represent, the personal glory of this Angel of God's presence, for "he is altogether lovely."

Strength also appears to be a scriptural idea when considered as applied to angels. Hence, says the psalmist, "Ye angels, that excel in strength." All their power is evidently communicated to them from above ; but it is clear that it is very great. The power of angels is intimated, when our Lord says, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" leaving us to infer that they, by their power, could deliver him from all his foes. And speak we of strength, the Angel of the covenant is mighty,— "the Lord of Hosts is his name;" let the deliverances he has wrought for his favored people teach us "his eternal power and Godhead," and show

us that his arm is all-powerful, and that he can accomplish whatsoever he pleaseth in the worlds of nature, providence, and grace. An angel could loose Peter from the prison, and set him free. Christ Jesus has delivered us who were tied and bound with the chain of our sins, and has demolished the strong holds of Satan.

Intelligence is another property of angels, and may serve to form a resemblance between them and the Captain of this host of the Lord. Their active minds are ever employed in investigating the things of the kingdom, and in looking with reverence and desire of perpetual instruction into the ark of God, and in learning from the churches "the manifold wisdom of God." But what is their information when compared with that of Him, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?" Their knowledge is indeed great, but not infinite; they cannot search the hearts of men, nor know future events in any other way than as they are taught by the Lord of hosts. But he tries the reins of the children of men; nor do we ever speak a greater truth than when we say to him, "Lord, thou knowest all things."

Holiness must also ever be viewed by us as one grand characteristic of the angels of God; hence in Scripture they are so frequently called, "his holy angels." Living so near Jehovah as they do, no wonder they reflect his image. They were first created pure, and they have ever been preserved so: they are the angels that sinned not, and therefore never fell. And the idea of their sanctity should impress our minds with shame, when we recollect that they watch our conduct, and inspect our devotions. But the Angel of whom we speak, here lays a sole claim to the title of "He that

is holy, and he that is true." When we bow before him, let us cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" and desire to see him as the eternal God, as a real man, and as our Mediator. He has ever maintained unspotted holiness.

The last excellency which we shall mention as existing in the angels is, concern for our welfare; for they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. They lose no opportunity of doing good to the saints, by suggesting good thoughts; by restraining Satan; by averting dangers; and by assisting and providing for them. But, as it regards benevolent deeds, Jesus has far outdone them all; he flew to help us, he ran to save: how ready was he to lay down his life in our behalf! how well pleased was this Angel of the Lord to acquit us, when we stood before him justly charged with numerous crimes! how gracious is he to the present moment, in supplying our wants, and doing for us what no angel in heaven could ever accomplish! Our interest lies near his heart; yea, he is not ashamed to call us brethren: there is mercy in all his dispensations; nor have any of us ever had reason to complain that he has been unfaithful to his promise, or unkind to us. These, then, are the characteristics of an Angel spoken of in my text, who befriended the Israelites of old, and who ever encampeth round about them that fear him. He possesses personal glory, unlimited strength, universal intelligence, untainted holiness, and a benevolent disposition. May his glory be the object of our admiration and study; his strength be exerted in delivering us from evil; his understanding be in a measure communicated to us, that we may be wise, and understand the fear of the Lord;



his holiness be the means of leading us to aspire after personal sanctity, and his benevolent actions excite our gratitude and praise forever.

Having admired the character of the Angel who was sent before the children of Israel, let us now—

II. Contemplate that office, for the discharge of which he is so eminently qualified.

Observe his Divine commission. "I," says God, "send an Angel before thee." He has been divinely dedicated to the office of Guide and Leader of his people; and hence, as he was present with the believing Israelites, and glorified their families, and their assemblies, with his heavenly grace, and conducted them forty years in the wilderness, so will he guard us from danger: the Lord himself shall be our Sun and Shield, we shall go whithersoever he leads us, and where we reside, there shall he also dwell. He shall lead, direct, and advise us; the rising generation shall cry after this glorious Angel, and say, "Be thou the guide of my youth:" and, to those in the decline of life, he says, "Even to old age I am he, and even to hoary hairs will I carry you." O, how happy ought we to be under the conduct of so Divine a guide! he goes before us, then, for two purposes specified in the text:—to preserve us all through our journey, and to administer to us an entrance into the wealthy place.

1. This Angel of the Lord goes before us to preserve us all through our journey. "I send an Angel," says God, "before thee, to keep thee in the way." He preserved them from wandering, for he led them forth by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation: he keeps them in the way marked out by unerring skill; the way that has been trodden by the whole host of the redeem-

ed, and, consequently, the way that leads directly to our Father's house. And if this 'great and mighty Angel goes before us, surely our safety is made abundantly certain : for what enemy can withstand him, if he slew Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan, for the Jews ? surely an army of corruptions shall be by his power laid level with the ground, and the world, sin, and the devil, be trampled under the feet of his followers, while they shout, " The Lord God of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." If he goes before us, to keep us in his way, how animated should we be by his conquests ; and while he says, " Fight on, my faithful band," let us wage war with every spiritual foe, and have respect to the recompense of the reward. This Angel goes before us to keep us in the way, and thus displays his infinite perfections ; his goodness, wisdom, condescension, ability, and holiness, are manifest on every occasion ; and, whilst he plants fear in the hearts of his foes, his grace and love will never fail to delight those who are chosen, called, and faithful. In conducting them through this world, he makes use of the directions of his word, the excellences of his own example, the influence of his Divine Spirit, and the hand of his providence : these things say to us, " This is the way, walk ye in it." Having then such a glorious Companion, let us not fear the difficulties that lie in our way, but forget our troubles : and in the strength of the Captain of salvation, who leads us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, " let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

2. The Angel of the covenant, too, goes before

us to administer to us an entrance into the wealthy place.

"I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared:" thus he did for the Israelites when he introduced them into Canaan: but, O, what will he do for believers when he brings them to the place which he has prepared! a place of which Canaan, after all, affords but a feeble representation; a place prepared for our reception before the world began, and taken possession of by Jesus as our forerunner, who has entered within the veil for us: to this place our exertions are directed, and at this place we shall all eventually appear; whilst to bring us thither is the part of our adorable Leader, the Angel of the covenant.

He shall cause us to loose our anchor from the earth, to pass into eternity, a gallant vessel, with every sail set to the favoring breeze, and entering into the harbor of eternal peace, amidst the plaudits of redeemed men and waiting angels. Jesus shall be the medium of our access to God in heaven, and through him, we shall have an abundant entrance administered unto us into his eternal kingdom and glory. He shall receive our disembodied spirits to himself, and, at the end of our journey, open to us the door of everlasting bliss, and show us the regions of glory; yea, say to us, "Come in, ye blessed of the Lord; why stand ye without?" Yea, he will present us to his Father, "blameless before him in love;" he will glory over us as the objects of his love, and the purchase of his blood: yea, through his mediation and death, we shall be forever "holy and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight, being presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceed-

ing joy." O what a distinguished part in the economy of our salvation does the Angel of the covenant bear! He first leads to the road that will conduct us to his kingdom and glory; and he finally introduces us into the august presence of God, even the Father, and so brings us to the place which he hath prepared. This shall be the portion of all his saints, for in glory they will all finally appear, though some on boards and some on broken pieces of the ship, yet it shall come to pass that they shall all escape safe to land.

Who is our guide?

Reason? passion? or the Angel of the covenant?

Sinners, destitute of a guide, &c.\*

What is the object of our hope?

Is it being brought to the place which God has prepared! or are we yet attached to earth? If we now have our conversation in heaven—

" See the kind angels at the gates,  
Inviting us to come;  
There Jesus the forerunner waits,  
To welcome travellers home."

#### IMPROVEMENT.

Our text suggests a motive to obedience; a test of examination; and a ground of hope.

\* No doubt Mr. Spencer enlarged on these subjects in delivering this sermon, and also, as usual, in the improvement.

## DISCOURSE XV.

*SINNERS INSULT THE GOODNESS AND LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.*

PREACHED DECEMBER 3, 1809.

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“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” ECCLESIASTES VIII. 11.

How dreadfully depraved is human nature! How abject is the condition in which the fall of our first parents has placed us! What a sink of pollution is the heart of man! Considered, indeed, as creatures in the eye of Deity, we must appear meanness itself: of the dust of the earth we were formed; and as soon as our sovereign Creator says, “Return, ye children of men,” we mix with our original; we are obliged to say to corruption, “Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.” But, O, viewed as sinners, how offensive must we be in the sight of the God of infinite purity and immaculate holiness! Alas, for us, for we have fallen! fallen low indeed from the state of rectitude in which we were created: being in honor, we did not abide: now darkness overspreads our understanding, perverseness distinguishes our will; earthly-mindedness characterizes our affections: the path of folly, is that we choose; the course of impiety, the resolution of living in direct enmity against

God, is that which we decidedly adopt. We need not go far for proofs of the truth of these assertions: that man is depraved, is written in his countenance, is discovered in his conversation, is betrayed in his deportment.

I have now before my eyes one of the most striking evidences of human depravity, that can ever be produced; it is in my text, which declares, that "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Which passage justifies four observations—That sin is an evil work—That sentence is gone out against it—That the execution of this sentence is often deferred—That this circumstance, through the depravity of men, frequently produces the worst effects.

I. Sin is an evil work.

Our remarks upon this part of our subject will, indeed, be very brief; and they must be regarded as only introductory to the rest. But I would charge home upon all my hearers the guilt of sin; I would, as in the presence of God and his elect angels, tell every individual in this place, that he has, ever since he had a being, been doing an evil work. Our text may, perhaps, directly refer to some particular sin; but it will do us no harm to consider the expression, "an evil work," as descriptive of sin in general; sin, brethren, to the commission of which our constitution is prone; sin, in the practice of which some amongst us have lived long; sin, which, perhaps, many in this congregation roll as a sweet morsel under their tongue, is "an evil work." A moment's reflection may show us—that it is evil in itself—and in its consequences.

1. Observe, it is evil in itself. For what is sin?

It is the transgression of the law ; it is the breach of the commandment which is holy, just, and good. The law of God is divinely excellent ; it is the line of human conduct, marked out by infinite wisdom and unquestionable authority : now sin is a departure from it, and therefore is evil ; it is a violation of the wholesome and excellent injunctions which are stamped with the broad seal of Heaven. To see that sin is an evil work, you need only contrast it with what the Bible recommends, and with that at which the most enlightened and holy men ever aim ; in its nature it is exceeding sinful ; it is alienation from the Divine life ; it is opposition to the Divine will : it is enmity to God, the Judge of all. Surely that which Satan brings into action, by influencing an already depraved and abandoned heart, must be evil. It is the abominable thing which God hateth. The reason why man is filthy, is because he drinketh in iniquity like water. Hence,

2. Sin is evil in its consequences ; for it was the cause of pain to the Saviour, and of woe to man. I say, it occasioned pain to the Saviour ; but for this evil work, he never would have become destitute, afflicted, tormented ; but for this, he never would have had to toil up Calvary's hill, bearing the weight of his own heavy cross ; but for this, he never would have endured the burden of the Father's wrath, or the insults of his inhuman foes. This evil work, too, introduced the whole train of calamities amongst mankind ; gave being to wretchedness and despair ; gave sting to conscience, and a sting to death. It is this that is now training up so many for hell, and preparing them for the endurance of the fiercest pains. O, is not sin then an evil work ? Ought you not with

holy haste, and determined aversion, to flee from it? Cry mightily to God, saying, Deliver us from evil? So vile a thing is sin. Let us show,

II. That sentence is declared against it. And a sentence which, permit me to say, is divinely announced, awfully severe, strictly just, and certain of its accomplishment. The sentence against an evil work is,

1. Divinely announced. Who can, who should sit in judgment upon it, but the God against whom it is committed? He now decides on human actions, and he will hereafter publicly investigate them at his dread tribunal, before an assembled world. He has sworn in his wrath that iniquity shall not stand in his sight; he has declared that he will, by no means, clear the guilty: that sin shall not go unpunished, is one of the fixed principles of the moral government of God, a rule of which he has never yet lost sight, nor will till the great burning day. On the account of this evil work he has kindled a fire in his anger, which shall burn to the lowest hell: all the curses contained in this book against sin, are affixed to the commission of it, by God, the Judge of all; so that we speak of no trifling thing when we describe the sentence against an evil work. It must strike you, too, if you think at all, that the sentence adverted to in my text is,

2. Awfully severe. God has shown us that we commit a great evil in forsaking him, the Fountain of living waters; he has intolerable pains for the workers of iniquity: the sentence is severe, for it condemns the miserable offender to the torments of conscience, to restless uneasiness, to insatiable desires, even in the present life; and we know that death is the wages of sin; that a painful sepa-



ration of soul and body, that a dreary lodging in the house appointed for all living, is the reward of human guilt. Mortality is our portion, death is our inheritance; there is no discharge in that war, no delivery from that trial, no method of escape from the stroke of the last enemy; we are sentenced to death for the commission of an evil; and behold, brethren, the solemnity, judgment and eternity succeed the king of terrors! The sentence pronounced upon us for sin is severe, and it condemns us to shame, and everlasting contempt. It assigns us our lot in "Tophet, which was ordained of old: it is made deep and large; the pile thereof is fire, and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." This is the sentence declared against the evil work, and it is,

3. Strictly just. Would it be at all consistent with the attributes and perfections of the Deity, if he were to be regardless of the contempt that is cast upon his authority: the disaffection men express to his government; or the temerity with which they violate his commands? Would he, then, be a God jealous of his honor? But we know, that to him it belongeth justly to punish sin. Shall sin, which intruded itself into our world, which otherwise would have been a blissful paradise of pleasure—shall sin, which has usurped his dominion, be unnoticed or unpunished by him? To vindicate his own character, to display the glory of his own perfections, especially to manifest to all his unspotted holiness and purity, to show that he will not wink at sin, he has pronounced sentence on all who practice it. You have just viewed the evil of sin, yea, seen that it has occasioned incalculable and irreparable mischief: I

leave it with yourselves to judge, whether the sentence pronounced against it be not just. Yes, brethren, in the confidence of this fact, the justice of God in sentencing sin, "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

This is a sentence, too, that is,

4. Certain of its accomplishment. For hath the Lord spoken, and shall it not be done? Hath he commanded, and shall it not stand fast? Be it known to you, brethren, that though the sons of Belial take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, and spend their days in wealth, yet in a moment they shall go down to the grave, and the candle of the wicked shall be put out. The sentence that God passes against the workers of iniquity, must be, in all its rigor and severity, put in force, that the terror of the Almighty's frown may be manifested, and the malignity of sin displayed. The fulfilment of the severe determination respecting the doom of sinners, rests on the justice of God; nor is there one threat that goes out of his mouth which he will not awfully put in force, and that to all eternity, upon the devoted head of the impenitent miserable offender. This is the sentence then which is declared against this evil work. But now I am to remark,

III. That the execution of this sentence is frequently deferred.

It "is not," in the language of my text, "executed speedily." This cannot be from any want of power in the Almighty to put it in immediate force, because it requires no peculiar exertion from him, to dash a world to atoms, or send a soul to hell. He could take you away with a stroke; could call you, sinner, from the midst of this con-

gregation into eternity ; yet he delays, and " sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily." He might, indeed, summon more than he does to appear before his bar, from the scene of pleasure, and from the couch of sensual indulgence ; but often, whilst they are doing these things, God keeps silence. Yet shall he, hereafter, come as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, to tear his enemies in pieces. But this circumstance of God refusing to execute the sentence speedily, arises,

1. From the forbearance of God. There is not a greater truth stated within this holy book, than that the Lord is long-suffering ; that he bears with our manners in this wilderness ; hence he does not now deal with mankind as he did of old, when he said, he would destroy man, whom he had created, from the face of the earth ; but now he in his long-suffering waits : he is, as his word acknowledges him to be, " slow to anger, gracious, and full of compassion ;" hence it is that the sons of Jacob are not consumed ; since there is this disposition in the Almighty, his sentence is not executed speedily ; " his mercies fail not." Here, then, we have human preservation, in the midst of dangers and snares, traced to its proper source, and we see why it is that his wrath delays. Again, is sentence against an evil work, in many instances, yet unexecuted ?

2. This represents our life as a state of trial. It shows us that the Lord is leading us in the wilderness, to humble, and to prove us, to know what is in our heart, whether we would serve the Lord our God or not : it proves to us that this is a probationary state : it sets this matter beyond the possibility of a doubt, that whilst we are sojourners

and pilgrims here, as all our fathers were, the eye of God is upon us, that he inspects our conduct and spies out all our ways; he gives us space and opportunity for repentance. O that we may, whilst sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, properly fill up our days, and, by fleeing to Jesus, avert the threatened danger. For, if the sentence is yet unfulfilled, I remark,

3. This lays a foundation for hope.

The messenger, Death, has not yet visited you; you may perhaps have yet no peculiar cause to imagine that you are going the way whence you shall not return; then, whilst the lamp of life burns, the trumpet of the gospel sounds; whilst the sentence is unexecuted, the blood of Christ has all-powerful efficacy. This thought, sinner, that as yet you are out of hell, should constrain you to look all around for help; should operate on your mind to lead you to the door of mercy, where, even now, if you knock, it shall be opened unto you. But, O, I am obliged, from the sentiment and spirit of my text, to observe,

IV. That this circumstance, through the depravity of man, often produces the worst effects. On account of it, my text assures us that "the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Here is mercy abused, long-suffering despised, compassion slighted. What ought to be the effect of the patience of God with sinners? It should lead them to repentance. If he comes so often, and so long, seeking fruit, ought he not to find it? But God says, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remaineth in him, and his scent is not chang-

ed." Your hearts are hardened, sinners, by the forbearance of God ; you become more and more resolved on iniquity, and determined in sin ; your hearts are fully set in you to do evil. Here observe that, because sentence against sin is not yet executed,

1. Mankind imagine that it will not be so dreadful as Scripture represents it. Men act as if they thought that every day they spent in sin diminished, instead of added to, their future sufferings ; and though favor is shown the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness ; even in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. He is wearied in the greatness of his way ; yet, says he not, " There is no hope ;" he is not sufficiently grieved. He determines to do evil, because, as the sentence is not yet executed, he foolishly wishes, and persuades himself, that what is so long delayed, may probably be tolerable to bear. But further, because the former part of my text is true,

2. Sinners presume that judgment never will come. Since it is delayed, they look not forward to the period when it will be awfully felt ; they suppose the Almighty to be altogether such an one as themselves, and therefore " their hearts are set in them to do evil." Thus, when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not, as the Lord had said ; neither would he let the people go. Because the sentence against sinners is not speedily executed, they say, in their hearts, " We shall not be moved, for we shall never be in adversity : " they tantalize those who are looking forward to the day of God's wrath, and say, " Where is the promise of his coming, for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things con-

tinue as they were from the beginning ?” They do not see, “that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day ;” but they determine to do evil, because they would persuade themselves that justice sleeps, and vengeance will never fall on them. There is one step more in this stage of impiety, and that is, many of them are, from this circumstance, resolved to do evil, because,

3. They boldly and impiously challenge the Divine wrath. “They draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope ;” they say, “Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it ; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh, and come, that we may know it ;” and because the Lord delayeth his coming, this “evil servant begins to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken :” their hearts are set in them to do evil ; they encourage this propensity ; they indulge this evil bias ; by drinking deeper and deeper of the fountain of pleasure, they endeavor to fortify their minds against the fear of ruin : with hell in all its terrors before their eyes, they go on to sin.

But, O, how awful is the state of obstinate sinners ! God often lets them take their course, nor stops them in the road to hell. But, sinner, stay, “We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance ? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest

up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ; who will render to every man according to his deeds." Rom. ii. 2—6.

The promises of God are no less true than his threatenings. He has pardoned believers ; he will not revoke it : but will encourage to holiness : how consolatory, &c.\* Let us pray for sinners—

" Swift may thy mercy, Lord, arise,  
Ere justice stops their breath ;  
And lighten those deluded eyes,  
That sleep the sleep of death."

\* No doubt, Mr. Spencer enlarged here in the delivery of this discourse, as was his custom in the improvement of his subjects.

## DISCOURSE XVI.

*GOD'S ABILITY TO BESTOW INCONCEIVABLE  
BLESSINGS.*

PREACHED FEBRUARY 11, 1810.

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"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." *EPHESIANS III. 20, 21.*

THERE certainly cannot be a more astonishing subject for human or angelic contemplation, than the love of Christ. It is, indeed, immense and unsearchable, vast in extent, without any commencement, enduring to eternity, unfathomable in its depths, and superlative in its heights: it challenges the most enlarged powers fully to comprehend it. All the ideas that may be entertained of it by men or angels are infinitely surpassed, since no stretch of thought can embrace its nature, or the grand manifestations that have been given of it. And yet, mysterious as this subject is, God has thought fit to enlighten the minds of a favored few, in every age of the world, so that they are enabled to understand, at least somewhat of that Divine theme, the full excellence of which cannot be told.

Hence the great apostle of the gentiles is emboldened to ask for the believing Ephesians no small boon; but to beg the Father of our Lord Je-



sus Christ to make them able to comprehend, as far as a human mind can, the love of Christ ; that they might feel its virtue, power, and sweetness, and be favored with a delightful view of its boundless riches. And when he had asked this great, and apparently, to many, hard thing, lest they should suppose for a moment, that they ought not to dare to expect such a favor, or that it was too much for God to grant, he intimates that even this, and more than this, can be accomplished for us by the God of all grace ; and therefore, to raise their expectations and confirm their faith, he says, " Now unto him who " (I can tell you, if you think this a great request) " is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

In proposing this text for your contemplation, I remark, that it gives us an insight into Jehovah's ability to bestow the greatest blessings on his saints, the proof that he has already given of it, and the honor that should be ascribed to him on account of it. Hoping that our reflections will be made useful to strike us with admiration of the exceeding riches of grace, we will, in the first place, indulge a few thoughts on,—

I. Jehovah's ability to bestow the greatest blessings on his saints.

" He is able," says my text, " to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." And who, may some say, can doubt it? Do we not all know that he is God all-mighty? Have we not often heard, that nothing is too hard for the Lord? Do you think that any of us doubt that with God all things are possible? But, O believ-

ers, have you always faith in this? Does your experience and your conduct show, that you always believingly rest your soul upon the Divine omnipotence? Rather do you not, by your needless fears, frequently give us reason to suppose that you do not believe in the power of the arm of God? This being the case, let your minds be stirred up by way of remembrance, that you may be encouraged to trust in the Lord Jehovah, by beholding, that "in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." We are not now called to dwell upon Jehovah's creating power, or to see how easily he can dash a world to pieces. It is not the power of his anger, which solicits your attention now. It is not what he can do to beautify and bless angels, or to torment with eternal anguish the lost spirits in hell; but it is what he can do in your behalf; what he can accomplish for you, who are, without his assistance, helpless as the new-born infant, or weaker than the feeble worm. And let us observe, that he is able to fulfil, and to exceed, the most enlarged prayer of faith, or the most vast desire of the heart. Our text shows us that he can exceed,

1. The most enlarged prayer of faith. "He is able," says my text, "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask." In our petitions at the throne of the heavenly Majesty, we never need be afraid to ask too much. "Open thy mouth wide," says the Lord of all, "and I will fill it;" be not scanty in your desires. Ask what I shall give thee, and for the sake of Jesus it shall be all bestowed. Is any grievous trial before you? O display the same faith in the power of God, that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did, when they said, "Our God whom we serve, is able to

deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." Are you fearing that the Redeemer's interest will not succeed in the world, when you plead the cause of Zion? Recollect that he is able, "of these stones, to raise up children unto Abraham." Are you afraid that you shall one day fall into the hand of your enemy, or backslide from the Lord that bought you, when you pray for persevering grace? Remember, that "he is able to make you stand." Are the stores of the Divine bounty exhausted? Is there not a perfect fulness of grace in the Saviour? Cannot our God supply all our need "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus?"

Ask then for spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and you shall receive them; for God is able to bestow them. Not only will he fulfil the desire of them that fear him, but he will far exceed it; for "he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask." This is illustrated in a memorable part of the experience of Solomon: he asked wisdom of the Lord; he gave it him, but said to him, "And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honor; so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee, all thy days."

Abraham, the father of the faithful, seemed to be, in the midst of trial, firmly persuaded of the truth stated in my text, that God was "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that he could ask or think;" hence, says the apostle, "he offered up Isaac, of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy seed be called; accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." So let us all believe and act upon the truth, that he is able to

save to the very uttermost, all that come unto him by the Son of his love. And when a Christian has been constantly praying for years, and has asked for all the blessings, the need of which his mind suggested, he may still say, He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that I ask. He is able also to exceed,

2. The most secret desires of the heart. He can "do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." There are some periods in our experience, when certain blessings can only be thought on by us, and we have not faith to plead for them with our heavenly Father; we seem to look at them with a wishful eye, but scarcely dare say, Lord, make them mine! But the ability of our covenant God, however, extends to this. Let us not limit the Holy One of Israel, but see that he can exceed all that we can even think. When a child of God has received any particular blessing from heaven, for which he is, as he ought to be, especially thankful, we may say to him, as the man of God said to Amaziah, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." "For it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him;" and, therefore, he must do more than we can think. We sometimes see the cup of blessing in the dear Redeemer's hand, and secretly long to taste. Well, at that time he shall say, "Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." Our highest thoughts shall be surpassed by the stores of his grace, and that grace shall be exceeding abundant towards us with faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. Yea, though at times we dare not think of possessing hereafter a station among God's redeemed ones in glory; yet "an entrance shall be

administered to us abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." O, then, let us not stagger at the promises, "but be strong in faith, giving glory to God." Let us rejoice, that what he has promised he is able to perform; and if he is so abundant in goodness and truth, as to exceed our strongest and largest desires, surely his loving-kindness is excellent; "therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of his wings." Yea, "we shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house; and he shall make us drink of the river of his pleasures; for with him is the fountain of life, and in his light shall we see light."

Think over as many temporal and spiritual blessings as you can; anticipate as many favors from the hand of God as possible; enumerate covenant blessings till you can proceed no further; and yet say, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we think." Surely he gives like a God, and withholds no good thing from them that walk uprightly. This is what God will do. Let us view,

## II. The proof that he has already given of it.

Even in the power that worketh in us; for, says my text, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us:" thus intimating, that the energy of Divine grace, as operative on the heart, is the best evidence that God could give us of his ability to exceed our desires and wishes.

This power, you know, was exerted in snatching you as a brand from the burning, in calling you from darkness to light. It made you willing to submit to the righteousness of God; it worked effectually in you; hence you threw down your

weapons of hostility against the Saviour, and took up, yea, put on the whole armor of God, that you might go forth to fight the battles of the Lord. You would have had no grace in your heart, had it not been communicated with power from on high ; and so even now this mighty power worketh in you, whereby he is able to subdue your evil passions and propensities to himself, and shall ever be exerted in your behalf.

The apostle's argument, then, seems to stand thus : there is a Divine power continually exerted in your behalf, constantly maintaining the life of faith in your soul : now, since God has exerted, and continues to exert, his potent arm in your behalf, you may learn from it, that he will even exceed your largest desires, and give you all necessary good. And we might indeed dwell with peculiar pleasure on this part of our subject, in endeavoring to show how it is that the power of Divine grace, as exerted within us, affords us an evidence of the truth of Jehovah's ability to exceed all that we ask or think ; but we will briefly remark, that this power displays itself in subduing our corruptions, in confirming our faith, in preserving us near to himself, and in enabling us to glorify his name ; and that all this is but an earnest of better things.

1. This power is put forth in subduing our corruptions.

What but the arm of Omnipotence could crucify the old man ? What but the effectual working of the Redeemer's power could mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts ? And this power does prevent sin from having dominion over us ; it restrains our appetites and passions ; it keeps the body of death in subjection. Inbred corruption would in-

deed prevail against us, were it not for the power that worketh in us; but there is a secret, silent operation of God upon the soul, which subdues the power of sin; and it shall soon appear, to our joy and satisfaction for ever, that the grace of God is much stronger than our sins, and more powerful than corruption itself. Surely, then, we have every encouragement to believe, that if the arm of the Lord has been lifted up to slay our corruptions, he will not refuse even to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

2. See this power exerted in confirming our faith. To believe in the Son of God, without the assistance of the Lord himself, is utterly impossible: as well might you attempt to create a new world. Did not he first teach you to believe? And must not the same spirit of faith be given to you now, to teach you always to believe that he is faithful who has promised? It is only by being assisted with the power from on high, that you can cast anchor upon the Rock of Ages, or do the will of God by believing in him whom he has sent into the world. But a constant act of faith is preserved in the soul by this mighty power. Moral suasion could not work faith in your heart; the Lord must give it, and increase it. Those who are ordained unto eternal life, and believe the gospel, are the men on whose minds the Spirit of God works in a most gracious and effectual way; and this he does to give them to know that he will do yet more, and to make them persuaded that he "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."

3. You may learn this, too, from considering that the power of God appears, in preserving us

near to himself. Does it not require Divine agency to keep you near to Christ, from whom, alas, you would be always wandering, did he not engage to put his fear in your heart, that so you might not depart from him? The blessings of communion and fellowship with the Saviour would, alas, be all strange things to us, did not God, by his powerful hand, raise us to that state of dignity in which we may enjoy them. God answers the prayers of the Saviour by keeping us through his own name, and so influencing our conduct that we are led on to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. When our sinful inclinations would lead us from him, he gently, delightfully restrains us, by saying to our souls, "I am your salvation," and causes us to esteem the light of his countenance more than any other enjoyment. If he does this for us, never let us fear but he will convince us of his ability "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

4. What gracious power does he evince, in enabling us to glorify his name! Without Divine strength, should we ever adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, or, with well-doing, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? Left to ourselves, should we not rather bring a reproach upon that worthy name by which we are called? This Divine energy assisted the apostle Paul in his labors; hence he said, "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily:" and again, "I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." This power working in us, too, shall influence our conduct; shall make us fill up our days to the Divine glory; and serve our generation according to the Divine



will. But, O, never let us forget that the same power which makes a man a Christian in this untoward generation, will also exceed all that he asks or thinks. This is the mighty power of God, which will accomplish so much for our good.

III. Consider the honor that should be ascribed to him on account of it.

"To him," says the apostle, "be glory." And is it not equitable that we should give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; and that, since we can view the attribute of Divine power engaged on our behalf, we should give him the praise he so justly demands; for his is the kingdom, the power, and the glory? But observe three things in the honor we must give to God; for, being able to exceed our desires, it must be ascribed to him in all the churches; it must be presented to him through the mediation of Christ; and it must be rendered to him to the latest period of time, and throughout eternity. The text shows us,

1. That honor must be ascribed to Christ in all the church. "Unto him be glory," says my text, "in the church." For this power, you know, can be exerted on the behalf of every individual member of his church, however mean or contemptible in the eyes of the world; therefore the joy, occasioned by the contemplation of it, shall pervade all the members of the mystical body of Christ. Every Christian, who has experienced proofs of this ability, has a right to call upon those members of the church of Christ with whom he is connected, to rejoice with him; and the gladness should be like "the precious oil that ran down from the beard, even Aaron's beard, and went down to the skirts of his garment." For this power God is alike praised, by men below and saints above,

whether we regard the church militant or triumphant : they praise him for the glory of his mighty acts, and they say, "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty ; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all ; and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all."

2. This glory must be presented to him through the mediation of Christ. To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus. We should never have dared to offer the sacrifice of praise to God, had it not been for this glorious Redeemer ; since he has by his cross glorified the Divine perfections, we can contemplate them with holy pleasure and delight, and adore him for them all. But he would spurn at our attempts at adoration, if we had no reference to the atonement of his Son. Our praises will never be acceptable in his sight, unless they are offered through faith in Christ Jesus. Besides, he must present them to God, even the Father ; hence we rejoice that "we have a great High Priest passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God," who bears our praises to the eternal throne. Yes, he stands at the altar, "having a golden censer, and there is given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne." How pleasing is the thought, that our imperfect praises are conveyed to God the Judge of all, by the Angel of the covenant ! What need have we of saints to be our advocates, when we have Christ Jesus ? Who else can render our

acknowledgments worthy of the acceptance of the eternal Father, but Jesus only? hence,

"Jesus alone shall bear my cries  
Up to his Father's throne;  
He, dearest Lord, perfumes my sighs,  
And sweetens every groan."

And so shall it be with our songs of praise, even till we are admitted into his presence. O, to him be glory by Christ Jesus.

3. The honor must be rendered to him to the latest period of time, and throughout eternity. "To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." So long as Jehovah possesses this Divine power, so long must he be honored on account of it. And I leave with yourselves to judge, whether this will not be for ever and ever. It must be throughout all ages; when the present generation shall have passed away, and another shall have come; when our heads shall be all laid beneath the clods of the valley, and the worms feed sweetly on our bodies; even then there will be a generation to call Jehovah blessed, and a seed to serve him. For then this power shall be exerted, and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord. Yea, till all his saints are gathered in, must the Head of the church be glorified, and world without end. When all the redeemed shall be united in Christ, this glory shall be rendered to Jehovah; since the sweet work of praise shall be our employment in heaven, for ever and ever.

Now to all this you are called upon to add the solemn word—Amen. My text is a prayer for the glory of God. O, offer it up from the bottom of your hearts!

And what think you, sinner, of the power of  
19\*

God? it will be exerted in destroying you. O, dread his anger, and take refuge in Jesus, the Sanctuary.\*

\* We have before noticed, that Mr. Spencer was accustomed to enlarge on his written notes, in the improvements of his sermons; we annex the following specimen, which was taken down in shorthand:—

"Now to all this, my dear hearers, you are required to pronounce the solemn word—Amen! Because God possesses this power, you ought to rejoice in it; because he can do exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think, you ought to entreat him, from the bottom of your hearts, that he would do it for you. My text is a prayer, a prayer for the glory of God, to which all our exertions ought to be directed. Is this, then, the object to which your exertions are directed? Are you saying, by your lives and conversations, 'Worthy is the Lamb?' Are you glorifying Jesus by your lives? Remember, that you have now an opportunity of showing that you desire to glorify him; and I trust that Jesus will receive a revenue of praise, within the walls of this place, at this opportunity.

"Sinners! What aspect does the mighty power of God wear towards you? It wears the most terrific aspect. You may think of defying the power of God; but once hath God spoken, yea, twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God; and power to destroy as well as to save. I have told you that there was a power that worked in the hearts of them that believe; but O! you have not submitted to it; your lusts are your guide; and God may say of you, 'He is joined to idols, let him alone!' He is able to inflict exceeding abundantly more pain upon you than you can think; he has so much ability, that he can terrify you by his anger, frown you into hell, and make you the eternal subject of the gnawing of the worm that never dies. Whither will you flee from his anger? Jesus shall be a sanctuary; but if you refuse him, whither will you flee from the Divine anger? A man shall be a covert from the tempest, and a shelter from the wind, and you can only take shelter in that way. But so soon as you have embraced him, he will present you to God as one who has received his good Spirit. The moment you lay hold on the hope set before you, that moment the omnipotence of God shall be engaged on your behalf, and the prayer of Christ shall be answered: 'Keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me.'

"Now to the God, whose power can do  
More than our thoughts or wishes know,  
Be everlasting honours done,  
By all the church, through Christ his Son.  
Amen."

## DISCOURSE XVII.

*PAUL'S UNTIRING ASSIDUITY IN PREACHING THE  
GOSPEL.*

PREACHED JUNE 10, 1810.

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“And there sat in a window a certain young man, named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep; and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and, embracing him, said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.”

ACTS xx. 9, 10.

“WHEREVER,” says the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, “two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Confined to no walls, he dispenses the blessings of his grace in every congregation of faithful men, who approach him through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and humbly expect that their services will be accepted through his own mediation and death. In all places where such characters record his name, he comes to them, and blesses them. We may say to him,

“Jesus, where’er thy people meet,  
There they behold thy mercy-seat;  
Where’er they seek thee thou art found,  
And every place is hallow’d ground.”

This, the experience of his saints, in every age, abundantly confirms; and I am induced to drop the remark now, because the circumstance which

calls for our attention at this time, took place in an upper chamber, where Paul addressed a worshipping assembly upon the things which belonged to their peace. The place was consecrated and sanctified by the presence of Him who resorts with his saints wherever they dwell, and hears them from whatever place they send their petitions to his throne. While they were thus worshipping, "in the holy calm of night," a certain young man, named Eutychus, who sat in a window, being fallen into a deep sleep, sunk down, and fell from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. And, by a miracle, he brought him back again to life, and restored him once more to his friends and relations.

Bear with me, my hearers, while from the text I direct your attention to four ideas.

I. Observe the holy zeal of the apostle Paul.

II. Observe the effect of the body in interrupting the exercises of worship.

III. Behold an affecting instance of the uncertainty of human life. And,

IV. Look at the kind conduct of the apostle Paul as emblematic of the grace of Jesus.

I. Observe the holy zeal of the apostle Paul.

And this noble principle discovers itself in him in two ways; in the season, and in the length of his discourse.

1. In the season of this discourse. He was now, you remember, like Jesus, going about doing good; scattering the seed of the kingdom, and declaring the testimony of God. He had remained six days at Troas, and on the morrow he was about to depart elsewhere, as the providence of God might direct. But there was one opportunity

left for addressing the inhabitants of Troas in the name of Jesus ; and he had too much concern for the Redeemer's honor, and too much love to immortal souls, to let that opportunity slip ; and though it was late, and the next morning he had to undertake a voyage, yet did he zealously improve the few hours that were left, by directing the attention of the people to that Jesus whom he every where preached. What a fine example of being instant in season and out of season ! what a striking instance of ministerial ardor ! what a noble proof of the influence of the love of Christ in the soul ! Great Head of the church, send down upon all thy servants like dispositions, that their exertions in thy cause may be constant and ardent, and that thine own honor may be widely promoted.

2. Again, we may observe the zeal of the apostle in the length of this discourse : for we are told, that he was long preaching. You find, that he continued his speech even until midnight ; his great soul was so occupied by the prospect of promoting the glory of Christ, and the best interests of the souls of men, that he paid no regard to the flight of time ; his tongue, no doubt, was like the pen of a ready-writer ; he was much enlarged, and a door of utterance was opened to him : so spake he with his tongue. Long sermons are not always proofs of glowing zeal ; but this evidently was so. He was, no doubt, blessed with a large measure of the Holy Spirit, and he recollected too, that he might never see them again ; and, therefore, his discourse was lengthened to a very unusual degree. In the work of the Lord, he loses his concern for himself, and he conferred not with flesh and blood ; he might have contented

himself with addressing them for a few minutes ; he might have indulged gloomy apprehensions that he should injure his health and constitution ; but this was not the case ; he knew that he had often committed both soul and body into the hands of his great Lord and Master, and that he was able to take care of both. Unconcerned, then, about sparing himself, and anxious to declare to them the whole counsel of God, he preached even until midnight. And O, shall we think much of the poor services we perform ? rather let us, after all that we have done in the cause of Christ, call ourselves unprofitable servants, and entreat a large measure of the influences of the Holy Spirit, that we may devise and execute fresh works for God ; remembering that we are hasting to a world where all these duties will be known no more. In our text, we may remark,

II. The influence of the body in interrupting the exercises of devotion. For we are informed, that while Paul was preaching, a young man of the name of Eutychus fell into a deep sleep. Shall we say that he was slothful, or that he had no relish for the truths delivered by Paul ? Probably he was not so fixed in his attention as he ought to have been. But the writer of this narrative rather seems inclined, in some measure, to excuse him from the charge of total indifference ; for it is stated, that there were many lights in the upper chamber, which must have made it hot ; Paul was long preaching ; the place, too, was considerably crowded ; and it was at the hour when Eutychus had been accustomed to repose : and who among us knows what laborious exercises this young man might have passed through in the day ? I hope that I am addressing some who have often



proved that the quiet and silence of the night is, in some circumstances, favorable to private devotion ; the gay world is then at rest ; the dissipation of mind, to which we are all more or less subject through the day, has then left us, and attention and fervor of spirit are not interrupted by noise or by spectators. But, this devotion was not private : and at a late hour, while Paul was preaching, Eutychus fell asleep. O, how shameful is the conduct of those persons, who, without any of the pleas of exercise, with which our text furnishes us for Eutychus, indulge in unhallowed repose in the temple of God ! There, drowsiness is sinful ; there, indulgence of it is hateful in the sight of God, and calculated to provoke his displeasure. But since we are composed of flesh as well as a spirit, hinderances to devotion, of some kind or other, must be expected while we remain below ; but while I have opportunity, allow me to drop two remarks on the influence of the body in interrupting pure devotion.

It is an effect which greatly distresses the minds of God's people : and it is an effect which shall soon be completely done away.

1. It is an effect which greatly distresses the minds of God's people. For they who really love to draw nigh to God, to profit by what they hear, and to have a rich foretaste of heaven below, do feel, and feel most keenly too, because they are chained down to earth. The consideration that here they are liable to grow cold, or feel fatigue in devotion, because that, though the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak, often makes them exclaim, " O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest ! " While I am glad that I can remark,

2. That it is an effect which shall soon be completely done away. Those of us who believe shall hereafter serve God, without weariness, day and night in his temple.

Our bodies will be refined as well as glorified ; all sluggishness, and every thing of an earthly nature, will be for ever done away. Then, indeed, will our devotions be pure, our strains exalted, and our engagement in the service of God uninterrupted and eternal. The worship of heaven will not be too long for us : there is no fear that we shall grow weary of immortality, and those holy employments in which we shall be engaged for ever ; there will be nothing there to occasion languor ; but every thing will be calculated to increase our joys, to make us more ardent, more earnest, in our celestial worship.

But O, before we arrive there, we must pass the bitterness of death ! and even while I discuss this text, I must call upon you,

III. To behold an affecting instance of the uncertainty of human life. For Eutychus sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. Here I may remark, that no age exempts us from the stroke of death,—and that no place can exempt us from his attacks.

Did Eutychus die ? then—

1. No age exempts us from the stroke of death ; for Eutychus was a young man. O, my young hearers, what an appeal is here made to your feelings and your hearts ! He was a young man, but he died ; so true it is, that in no stage of our lives can we consider ourselves as unexposed to the approach of that grim tyrant, who reigned from Adam to Moses, and from Moses even until now. Eutychus died ; and O, shall those of us who are but

just rising up into life, presume on length of days, and dare to expect a continued succession of pleasures here? Ah! he may weaken our strength in the way; he may shorten our days; and how many are there as young, and younger than ourselves, who, from time to time, are called to quit the busy scenes of the present life, for the solemnities of the world to come! My text seems to call upon me to say to the young people, in the presence of God, "Be ye also ready, for the Son of man cometh in an hour when ye think not." But remember, that you cannot be ready for death and judgment, without an interest in the Redeemer. Flee then to Jesus, or early death will be to you a transition to hell. But if Christ be found in your hearts the hope of glory; if in the fountain of his blood you have washed away the stains of sin, death itself is your friend: and should you live long, or die early, the same blessing awaits you. You shall come to your grave in peace, and not see all the evil which God shall bring upon the world. But young people, with all their amiableness, their vivacity, their health, their prosperity, are liable to death, long before the evil days come, when they shall say, I have no pleasure in them.

2. No place is secure from the attacks of death. Eutychus had, probably, heard of the eloquence of the apostle, and therefore went to this place to hear him; but little did he expect that there he should give up the ghost. Do you think that it ever entered his mind that mortality should triumph in a Christian assembly, or that death should enter the house of God?

Often, indeed, does he frequent the haunts of dissipation; he comes up into our windows, and

enters into our palaces, to take the children from without, and the young men from the streets ; he makes inroads upon the domestic circle ; he goes into the court, the cottage ; yea, here you see he enters the church, and selects a trophy of his dominion from the worshipping assembly. Let us never, then, suppose that we can be in any place where death cannot reach us, till we get to the New Jerusalem, where he cannot enter, where there shall be no more death. It is, indeed, the glory of that worshipping assembly, of that holy society, that death cannot diminish its numbers ; it is constituted and ordained to live for ever and ever. Then all the saints shall unitedly exult over death itself, and be lost in wonder at the triumphs of " Him who liveth, and was dead, and behold he is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death." And till introduced into that happy land, let us be always watching, ever attentive to our Lord's command, and constantly vigilant in seeking for glory, honor, and immortality. But to proceed—

IV. I would have you look at the conduct of the apostle, as emblematic of the grace of Jesus ; for when Paul found that he had fallen down dead, he " went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves ; for his life is in him." Divine power accompanied the means he used ; the young man was brought back again to life, and they were not a little comforted. How tender was the apostle's compassion ! how noble, how generous his conduct ! He appears to imitate the prophet Elijah, who stretched himself upon the child of the woman of Zarephath, and said, " O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again ;" the same success,

too, attended his exertion, as was kindly afforded to Elijah. The God of our lives raised up Eutychus again to health and strength, who had been just before dead. From contemplating the conduct of Paul, however, let us turn to admire the grace of the great "Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Let us see how he displays his condescension and mercy, in seeking dead sinners, in raising them to spiritual life, and in having them introduced to his saints.

1. He seeks dead sinners. Paul went down to see this dead man; he broke off his discourse, and went down to him, that he might afford him assistance. But, O! what did Jesus do for those that were dead in trespasses and sin? I say, it is true, that "the Son of God is come to seek and to save that which is lost." How cheerfully he left his exalted state in heaven, where he stands the chief wonder of the holy angels! How readily he left the bright robes he wore above, that he might take upon him, not the nature of angels, but of the seed of Abraham! He seeks out, even now, the lost, the miserable, and the dead, that he may call them heirs of heaven; his eye is upon those to whom he has designs of love, even while they are in nature's darkness, in the grave of sin; and he also sends his gospel, to discover to them their true character, and declare to them his own grace. Great Shepherd of the church, search out the dead in this congregation; let them hear thy voice and live to thee.

2. He raises them to spiritual life. Through Paul's instrumentality, the young man was restored to life, and its concomitant blessings. And you hath Jesus quickened: it was he that breathed upon the dry bones, so that they lived; his power-

ful voice in the gospel speaks to his favorites, in such a way as is irresistible: he says to them, "Come forth;" and lo, they live to his honor and glory: and so the "Son quickeneth whom he will." Spiritual death cannot hold them captives any longer, to whom he speaks by his irresistible grace: lifeless as they were before his Spirit animates them, they breathe the breath of heaven; they ejaculate holy prayer; they rise and stand upon their feet; they feel a thousand new and delightful sensations; they are active for God in the world, and walk in the ways of his commandments. They could not raise themselves; no external means could bring them to life; but Jesus, by his Spirit, has done what nothing else could accomplish; he has effected for them, what Paul did for Eutychus, raised them to life, and to themselves again.

3. It is worthy of remark, that he causes them to be introduced to his saints. The young man was brought in alive, and they "were not a little comforted." With what pleasure must they have regarded him, as one risen from the dead; as a new proof of the power of God; as a new honor put upon the ministry of the apostle Paul! And when Jesus has raised a great sinner, he puts him among the children; he makes his followers hail him into their society; he teaches them to say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?" and then they all rejoice over him, as having escaped innumerable ills, and as now walking in an honorable path to heaven. Yea, angels themselves rejoice over the quickened dead, for the whole church exults with pleasure that God is making additions to its numbers: and He himself exults with pleasure in the bands

which he plucks from the burning ; in the sinner he saves by his grace ; in the impoverished whom he enriches ; and in the dead whom he has raised to life. He holds up these characters as spectacles worthy of the regard of enlightened men, and as occasions of joy to all them that believe.

How absurd is it to doubt the doctrine of the resurrection ! Eutychus was raised, so shall all mankind, even by the same power of God. " Why should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should raise the dead ? " But the dead are raised for different purposes.

Saints live for ever in the enjoyment of perfect happiness.

Sinners must feel the bitter pangs of eternal death.

Let each of us say,—

" O may I stand before the Lamb,  
When earth and seas are fled ;  
And hear the Judge pronounce my name,  
With blessings on my head ! "

Amen.

## DISCOURSE XVIII.

*INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL ON ITS BELIEVING  
FRIENDS.*

PREACHED JUNE 20, 1810.

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*"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."*

*TITUS II. 11, 12.*

IF any thing is calculated to excite the tears of commiseration from a generous mind, surely the wretched state of the lost sons of Adam must produce such an effect. Placed upon the stage of life as they are, with a propensity to evil, and pursuing, as they do with eagerness, the desires of the flesh and of the mind; surely when we recollect that state of primeval dignity and eminence in holiness from which they have so awfully, so deeply fallen, we must say, "How is the gold become dim, how is the most fine gold changed!" The children of men, from their natural depravity, and the influence of habits acquired by continuance in sin, are all unholy and impure; the image of God, which was once impressed in such lively and pleasing characters upon the heart of their first parent, their head and representative, is now entirely lost, the glory is departed. Sin, that abominable thing which God's righteous soul hateth,



which breaks his law, opposes his government, and insults his Spirit, is the delight, the unhallowed source of pleasure, to the creatures he has made. He looks down from his high throne in glory, he sees men walking in a vain show, and he says concerning us, considered in the condition in which we were born, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Well may we then look around us for help. It surely becomes us to inquire what shall raise us from this abject state of sin, and deliver us from those iniquities which prevail against us. How shall our tempers, which are by nature evil, become excellent and Divine? How shall our conduct, which is that of the children of disobedience, be so changed as to become that which men shall love, angels admire, and God himself approve?

Shall we sit at the feet of heathen sages? They will, indeed, give us excellent precepts, but they cannot touch the springs of action; they cannot reach the heart. Their advice may be excellent, but the reformation which it can accomplish is, after all, but partial; it arises from no noble principles: it is imperfect, it is unacceptable in the sight of God. Shall the law of Moses produce in us that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord? Its commands are, indeed, represented by the pen of inspiration, as "holy, just, and good:" it is a transcript of the Divine mind; it is an exact rule for the conduct of men; but instead of possessing power to render us "Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile," its office is, by its own spirituality, to show us our exceeding sinfulness, to condemn us, and to declare to us that we are accursed, because we have "not continued in all things written in the book of the law to do

them." Whither then shall he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness direct his attention? Where shall those of us, who, sensible of the plague of our hearts, and the sins of our lives, long for purity, and grasp after holiness, find that which we so eagerly desire? It devolves on me to show you that it may be found in the gospel of Jesus. Descending from the skies, it points out to us the path of piety and peace; it shows us the mount of holiness, bids us climb it, and gives us strength to reach its summit. This holy guide, then, shall direct our inquiries, yea, it shall do more, it shall influence our hearts. It is not enough that we hear a voice, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it;" but we, wretched and depraved as we are by nature, must, by the potent, the blessed influence of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, become holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. Then shall we display to the world the triumphs of grace, the genuine effects of religion, and the vast superiority of the gospel, to all the schemes that men devise.

Permit me, then, with as much brevity as possible, to establish the fact, that the gospel does produce the most salutary effects on the mind and deportment; and to trace it in the mode of its operations.

I. We will establish the fact, that the gospel does produce the most salutary effects on the mind and deportment.

We mean to say, that the gospel, by its holy power, produces a radical, a total change; that it forms us new creatures in Christ Jesus; and makes us partakers of a Divine nature: the members of the body, and the faculties of the soul, are alike affected by its blessed influence; that tongue,

which was once "an unruly member, full of deadly poison," now tells the wonders of redeeming grace; those eyes, that were once evil and "full of adultery," are now turned to heaven with pious adoration, or gushing with tears of penitence for sin; those ears, which before could listen to nothing but what was sinful and depraved, are now opened to attend to the things of the kingdom; the hands are lifted up to God in prayer; the lips praise the name of Jesus. That heart, which was once "a cage full of unclean birds," is now a temple for God to dwell in, through the eternal Spirit. When the power of the gospel is experienced in the heart, the obstinate become mild; the self-willed, submissive; the careless, thoughtful; and the dissolute, holy. It is not enough that the gospel enlightens the judgment, and elevates the affections, but it must do more; it must transform both soul and body into the image of Christ, and thus affect the temper and the conduct; and that it does this, may be proved, from the design of God, and the testimony of example. Learn that the gospel produces a holy effect upon the disposition and deportment of mankind,

1. From the design of God.

Jehovah determined to accomplish, by the inspiration and diffusion of the gospel, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak." He chose it to be the grand means of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan to God. He ordained it to be the sword of his Spirit, that should slay our corruptions; the rod of his strength, that should rule in our hearts; and the noblest display of his power in raising us to a high elevation of mental and moral excellence. He resolved in his eternal mind, that his

word should heal the nations of the deadly plague of sin, and clothe the people in the garments of purity. Then, surely, the purposes of the Lord must stand, and he will do all his pleasure, because he wisely determined that it should be so; therefore his gospel powerfully influences the temper and conduct. This may be also seen,

2. By the testimony of example.

Let those who have received the gospel in the love of it, be viewed by us as a long cloud of witnesses to its truth and Divine effects; for into what heart has it darted its influence that has not, from being obdurate and hard, become tender and susceptible? Who is there that firmly believes the gospel testimony, that does not adopt a different line of conduct from that which is pursued by the children of disobedience? Through the power of the gospel, those who were cruel and profane, as Manasseh, like him begin to seek the Lord their God, and repent with full purpose of heart. Those who were as extortionate as Zaccheus, when the salvation of the gospel comes to their ears and their hearts, like him feel a spirit of pure benevolence to the world, and love to Him, who caused his grace to abound much more than sin. Those who persecuted the saints, like Saul of Tarsus, when the light of the gospel shines into their souls, throw down their weapons of hostility to Christ and his chosen, and determine to war a good warfare, under the protection of the Captain of salvation. When all other attempts at reforming the character have failed, the gospel has gloriously succeeded. It has taught the liar to become sincere; the intemperate to become sober; the proud to become humble; the wanton to become chaste; and the self-righteous to submit to

the obedience of faith. Yea, am I not addressing some who glory in the thought, that they are trophies of its power, and who stand in the church of Christ as monuments of its grace: though ye were sometimes foolish and disobedient, the time past of your life has sufficed you, wherein to have wrought the will of the gentiles; and you now desire to serve God in all holiness and righteousness. What, though I might, after I had mentioned some of the slaves of sin, say, "And such were some of you;" yet I rejoice that I am able to add, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" and therefore you display the influence of the gospel, in your temper and conduct. But I shall detain you no longer in attempting to prove what must, to those who know the purity of the gospel, appear a self-evident proposition; but shall now,

II. Trace the gospel in the mode of its operation, or show how it is that it produces so happy an effect; and admire the wise adaptation of the means to the accomplishment of the end.

The gospel, then, influences the conduct, as it strikes a death-blow at our evil propensities, as it implants new principles in the soul, as it presents us with a perfect pattern of all that is excellent, as it proposes the noblest motives to purity of heart and life, and as by the enjoyment of its consolations it gives us strength to obey its precepts.

1. The gospel is every way calculated to influence the conduct, because it strikes a death-blow at our evil propensities. When we believe the record that God hath given us of his Son, our corruptions begin to weaken; and the man of sin dies daily. The gospel nails our abominable re-

bellion to the cross of Jesus, and takes away the enmity of the heart ; this being done, that which before opposed the will of God is removed, and we desire to run in the way of his commandments, since he has enlarged our hearts. Well has the immortal Cowper said—

“ Let this hint suffice :  
The cross once seen, is death to every vice ;  
Else He that hung there, suffer'd all his pain,  
Bled, groan'd, and agonized, and died, in vain.”

The gospel controls the power and dominion of sin within us ; it subdues the enmity of the heart ; and therefore bends us to obey the laws of Heaven.

2. When we receive the gospel in the love of it, new principles are implanted in the soul. For it imparts to us a taste for holiness ; a perception of its beauty ; an ardent desire to cultivate Christian purity in the thoughts we indulge, the words we speak, and the actions we perform. As soon as the gospel has come to us, as it is indeed and in truth, the word of God, and not of man, we begin to love the Divine law ; we discover a tendency to holiness, an increase in grace, yea, an earnest aspiration after being perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. By the gospel, the seeds of Divine grace are sown in the naturally barren soil of the human heart, which, under the blessing of Heaven, spring up, and present us with those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

3. The gospel influences the conduct as it proposes the noblest motives to purity of heart and life. It gives us to feel that the love of Christ constrains us. This is indeed a spring of action, an incentive to obedience, with the force of which the unregenerate are totally unacquainted, yet the

power of which is mighty beyond conception ; for whenever the soul of an individual is touched with the love of Christ, he readily yields him implicit and constant obedience. The gospel secures a pleasing change in our spirit and temper immediately, as it makes us glow with affection to its glorious subject, its adorable Author. This justifies us in saying,—

“Talk they of morals ? O thou bleeding Love !  
Thou Teacher of true morals to mankind ;  
The grand morality is love of thee.”

The gospel teaches us to aim to please God, as well as to show to the world that we are travellers to a heavenly city, within whose gates nothing that defileth, or is defiled, can ever enter.

4. The gospel presents us with a perfect pattern of all that is excellent. It sets before us Jesus the Son of God, whose immaculate purity heaven and earth can attest. In him, indeed, all the rays of moral excellence meet as in one point ; and we not only view in him the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, but we behold human nature adorned and dignified, by a lively combination of all the virtues of which it is capable. And after the gospel has exhibited to us the holy Jesus, it says to us, “Let the same mind be in you, which was also in him.” Yea, by its heavenly power, it assimilates us to his image ; it changes us into his likeness ; it forms us upon a Divine model ; for “we all with open face beholding, in the glass of the gospel, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” O blessed influence of the glorious gospel !

5. The enjoyment of its consolations gives strength to obey its precepts. If you ask here, Does the gospel influence the temper and conduct? We can tell you that it takes you to Christ's banqueting house, where his banner over you is love; it places you at his table, where you hear him say, "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" and where you are abundantly satisfied with his presence, and drink of the wine of the kingdom. Sentiments of gratitude are then excited in your mind to the Founder of the feast; you feel thankful to him, and you rise from your seat animated by his favor, and sensible of his love. You evidence that you are not only refreshed by his bounty, but determined to execute his commands; and when you have enjoyed the most, you say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" So much life and vigor are imparted to our minds by a firm belief of the glad tidings of the gospel, that no duty appears too hard for us to discharge, no trial too heavy to bear; but our triumphant exclamation is, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me!" Hence follows a cheerful acquiescence in the duties we owe to one another, to God, and to the world.

Our tempers, by those frequent and solemn interviews with which we are indulged, become spiritual, heavenly, and Divine; admiring spectators see that we have been with Jesus: like Enoch, we walk with God, and, like him, shall be wafted away to the world of purity and peace.

And are these the triumphs of the gospel? Does it indeed produce such a Divine change in the moral world? Then surely it is worthy of its Author; of Him, "for whom are all things, and



by whom are all things." Is it any disgrace to the wisdom that devised it, or the love that gave it to the nations? No: for in the gospel God has declared the glory of all his perfections, and particularly does his holiness shine in it with radiant lustre.

Is it the tendency of the gospel to refine and exalt the character; to make the temper and conduct such as God requires? then who would not long for its general diffusion; who would not exclaim with ardour, "Fly abroad, thou mighty gospel?" Who would not love those noble institutions which have in view its wider circulation, and which God has honored for the conveyance of its blessings to the children of men?

But O! are there not many who profess to love the gospel, and to feel its power, who are filled with envy, malice, and all uncharitableness? Yes, there are! But O thou blessed Jesus, are these thy disciples? Most glorious gospel! are these the men in whose hearts thy truths have made a deep impression? The Saviour and the gospel alike disown them: and, "Depart from me, I never knew you," will hereafter be uttered to them by God the Judge of all.

I dare not persuade myself to leave this pulpit, without asking my hearers, What has the gospel done for you? In the presence of God, and all his holy angels, I would put this question to you, and leave you with all solemnity to consult God and your own consciences on the subject. But O, do remember, that you may hear the gospel; you may avow your attachment to it; you may liberally support its interests; and yet die, after all, without experiencing its blessings, and have a

**neglected gospel rise up in judgment against you, to aggravate your condemnation.**

**Here, however, allow me to turn from man to God: suffer me to express my wishes for all who compose this congregation; and, looking around you, permit me to say to the God of purity and the God of the gospel, "Sanctify them all through thy truth; thy word is truth."\***

**\* This Sermon was preached at the Anniversary of Hoxton College.**

## DISCOURSE XIX.

*SIN AND DEATH BY ADAM, ETERNAL LIFE BY CHRIST.*

PREACHED OCTOBER 7, 1810.

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“As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.”  
1 CORINTHIANS XV. 49.

“THE proper study of mankind is man ;” and the best science to which any of us can attain is, to know ourselves, for “all wisdom centres there.” Human nature is a fit subject of investigation, and will well repay the mind’s attention to it ; it has frequently been represented in unjust and improper points of view ; men have formed very mistaken ideas of themselves and of their condition, and have too often represented their case to be rather what they wished it, than what it really is. The testimony of the Bible, however, viewed in connexion with facts which we are every day called to witness, will appear to be the best teacher of what we are in our true character, our real condition, and our bounden duty. Here we learn what man originally was, what he now is, and to what standard of excellence he ought to attain. From the Bible alone, that fruit of heavenly wisdom, can we derive proper ideas of human nature. Here its past excellence, its present degradation, and the only means by which it can possibly be restored, are detailed with unquestionable veracity, and told by the Spirit of God. Here we learn that, as in Adam all whom he represented, the whole human race, fell and died ; so in Christ Jesus, all to whom

he is a covenant Head, shall live for evermore ; and that as these characters, before conversion, gave awful evidence of fatal union to their head, so, by the grace of God, shall they now be made to resemble Jesus, who is given as a covenant of the people, who is the head of the body, the church. " As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Here, then, you perceive the depth of misery to which you fell, and the height of happiness to which you are raised. My text shows you the man, by whose disobedience you lost your peace, your happiness, your God. My text presents you also with that glorious Redeemer, who has " restored that which he took not away," and given you more blessings than your father lost. In discoursing upon this text, we must,

I. Confirm the lamentable fact, that, by nature, we all bear the image of the earthly.

II. Rejoice in the glorious truth, that, as believers, we shall bear the image of the Lord from heaven.

It is necessary,

I. To show that we all bear the image of the earthly Adam. So says my text ; so says my experience, the melancholy experience of all ages and nations ; so witness the shrieks, the groans of dying infants ; so testify our own eyes, beholding the miseries that are abroad in the world ; so witness our own feelings in the endurance of those ills to which mortality is subject. Here too, let it be remembered, that the mischief we lament is universal ; that the evils we deplore are experienced all over the world ; that all mankind suffer from their connexion with their first parent ; that every individual on the globe bears the image of the earthly Adam.

O, show us, if you can, the spot of earth to which the effects of the curse have not yet reached ; and tell us if, among all the tribes of men in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, there are any to be found, who do not discover a depraved nature, who do not bear the image of the earthly. So extensive are the calamities introduced into the world by sin ; so general the dire effect of our first parent's disobedience to the will of Heaven.

In order that we may enter into the import of the expression, "bearing the image of the earthly," permit us to observe, that we bear this image in our bodies, and that we bear it in our souls. Behold it,

1. In our bodies, which are earthly, frail, and tending to dissolution.

Observe, this image is evident in our bodies, as they are earthly ; for "the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground ;" so poor in our origin, that we have no pretension at all to nobility of descent, but must look upon the earth as our common parent, and say, O, how poor a creature "is man, that is a worm, and the son of man, that is a worm !" O, what a lecture does the constitution of our frame read us upon the folly of human pride, upon the ridiculous absurdity of towering ambition ! Never let us suppose ourselves to be some great ones, since it is evident that we are vile as the dust ; and the ground we tread on contains the materials of our formation, and the means of our support. Verily, our bodies are but clods of clay, and soon must they return to the earth out of which they were taken. Now the condition of our frame points out the resemblance between Adam and all his race, between the father and his children. It is the image of the earthly Adam.

Our bodies are also frail, and thus bear the image described in the text. To what a long train of diseases and disorders are they liable! To what a list of accidents and ills are they exposed! "What is your life? it is even a vapor that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away." Our bodies are easily borne down by weariness and fatigue, are soon brought low by affliction. How little can they sustain or endure! With what numerous proofs of their weakness are they daily presenting us! How shortly may the strongest among us, the man who boasts most of the soundness of his health and vigor of his constitution, be confined to the chamber of sickness! Ah! God may weaken your strength in the way; he may shorten your days. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." And is the body a tabernacle?

"Weak cottage where our souls reside,  
Flesh but a tottering wall;  
With frightful breaches gaping wide,  
The building bends to fall.

"All round it storms of trouble blow,  
And waves of sorrow roll;  
Cold waves and wintry storms beat through,  
And pain the tenant soul."

O Adam! what hast thou done!

Again, Our bodies tend to destruction. They give us repeated proofs that this is not their final abode; they show that they are hasting to the grave, and that in its gloomy repository they must all shortly lie. Death reigns, and all men are his subjects: before the king of terrors we all must shortly bow; he will change our countenances and send us away. Now, in the whole of our passage to the house appointed for all living, in every step we take to the solemn dwelling of the dead, we are bearing the image of the earthly. You lose a

friend ; a dear relative leaves you and life, and enters the world to come, whereof we speak ; his immortal spirit has ascended to God, who gave it ; but here, with you, he has left his body, to be placed in the ground till the morning of the resurrection. Before you inter it in the gloomy cavern, its destined abode, you gaze on it with the most gloomy and inexpressible feelings. O, who can tell your sensations, as you behold that cabinet now without its jewel ; that tabernacle of the soul now without its tenant ! As long as you can, you retain it near you ; you are unwilling to part with the remains of your companion and your friend ; you appear to grudge the earth its due, and the worm its prey ; till at length you are obliged to say, " Bury my dead out of my sight ! " The ghastly, the loathsome ruins of your well-beloved friend offend you. But, as you draw near, to take the last, last look of all that was mortal in your friend, let me ask, what is that you behold, and at which you shudder ? What is that in the cold corpse which shocks the feelings of humanity, and harrows up the soul ? What is it ? It is the image of the earthly Adam ! And ere long you shall bear it too. It is seen in the countenance of the dead.

2. We all bear this image in our souls. You have seen the impression of it upon our mortal part ; now let us behold it upon that within us, which can never die, the soul, the immortal principle which was at first endowed with the noblest faculties, pervaded with the finest feelings, and rendered capable of glorifying its great Creator ; the soul, that once appeared the resemblance of the Deity, the genuine copy of the mind of God, now bears this inscription, " Ichabod, the glory is

departed." It now bears the image of the earthly Adam : for observe,—It is defiled with sin,—and it is exposed to Divine wrath.

1. Our souls are defiled with sin.

O how impure, how unholy is the mind of man ! It has received such a taint, such a stain, as you cannot remove. 'The moment we come into the world, we bring with us the most hateful, the most perverse dispositions ; a tendency, a bias to evil ; and we bear the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin. " Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? " What but renovating grace can purify the polluted soul of man ? Our guilt, how deep its stains ! How loathsome ! how offensive ! How guilty are our souls before God ! This is bearing the image of the earthly Adam.

2. Our souls are exposed to Divine wrath, and thus bear the image of the earthly.

While we remain in the condition in which we were born, God is " angry with us every day." Our souls are by nature fit subjects of the Divine vengeance ; and well will it be for us if the vials of Divine wrath are not poured upon our devoted heads forever and ever. " The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It is the decree of Heaven,—the judgment of the skies,—the doom of man. " I have," says the great Eternal, " kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn to the lowest hell ; " and our exposure to all this wrath, our " fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries," shows us the image of the earthly Adam. Here you behold an awful representation of the dire effect of human crimes, and see to what miseries and consequences sin has exposed us. Well may we mourn over the lost image of God ! Surely, if we have feelings, they



must be excited here. Shall no anxiety be roused on account of the dreadful, the universal depravity of human nature? Shall no concern be discovered at the miseries of the world? God forbid! O that our head were waters, and our eyes, as it were, fountains of tears, that we might weep over the melancholy condition of our own souls, the souls of our brethren, of our countrymen, and of all mankind; for all these bear the image of the earthly Adam.

But the more pleasing part of our subject now courts our attention. Let us therefore,

II. Rejoice in the glorious truth, that, as believers, we shall also bear the image of the Lord from heaven. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

"The second Adam shall restore  
The ruins of the first;  
Hosanna to that sovereign power  
That new creates our dust."

And here I cannot but pause for a moment to observe, what an illustrious character is here introduced to our attention, the Second Adam! This is he who has been declared to be the Son of God with power. It is Jesus, the First-born among many brethren. And behold the excellences that meet in his character; see his superiority to the first Adam! "The first Adam is of the earth, earthy; the second Adam is the Lord from heaven:" the first Adam transgressed the Divine command, and suffered for his fault; the second Adam magnified the law, and made it honorable: the first Adam ruined himself, and all his posterity; the second Adam gives us abundance of grace, imputes to us his own righteousness, and causes us to bear his image in the world. This

Divine image, however, is not borne by all the human race, but by those alone to whom Christ is a covenant Head ; for, as in Adam all those, whose representative he stood, fell and died ; so in Christ Jesus all, in whose stead he suffered and bare the curse, shall be made alive to God, and to the enjoyment of happiness. These characters evince, that they were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world, by their belief of the gospel while they live ; and all these characters shall, according to the promise, and through the grace of their heavenly Father, bear the image, and reflect the glory of Christ, their great Redeemer. Concerning this blessed image, I make three remarks : It is first impressed upon us at the time of our regeneration,—It shall visibly discover itself through the whole course of our Christian life,—It shall be rendered more conspicuous and glorious in the morning of the resurrection.

1. It is first impressed upon us at the time of our regeneration. For that is the time when “ it pleased God, who separated us from our mother’s womb, to call us by his grace, and to reveal his Son in us ;” then it is that we are enabled “ to put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” Effectual grace then gives a new bias to the mind, and the Father of the spirits of all flesh then makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus. O, most memorable day, when we were sealed to the day of redemption ! O day, well worthy to be remembered with grateful feelings, when the image of Christ was first impressed upon our minds ! With what new powers, what new feelings, what new desires, were we then enriched ! The Saviour imparted to us the princi-

ple of grace ; he made us, who before lived only for folly and sin, to pant after holiness, as our noblest pursuit ; to grasp after purity, as our noblest attainment. O what a difference did this make in our character ! We were, indeed, formed anew ; we were made partakers of Christ, and of a Divine nature ; we then first began to bear the image of the heavenly : there is a people, a host of worshippers, whom Jehovah has formed for himself, and they shall show forth his praise ; every one of them has had a Divine impression made upon his mind by the Eternal Spirit, which altogether rendered him a new creature, and made him to bear the image of the heavenly. Never let us forget, that nothing but the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit can make us bear this sacred image ; for without his gracious work upon the heart, the children of men remain still the slaves of Satan, the heirs of destruction, and God is not in all their thoughts ; his word has not taken root in their minds ; his image has not yet been impressed upon their hearts. But ye who believe have an unction from the Holy One ; ye know all things ; you bear the image of the heavenly.

2. This image shall visibly discover itself through the whole course of the Christian's life.

It shall be seen in the walk and deportment of a good man, that he bears the image of the heavenly. This lovely image shall produce a happy effect upon his temper, his passions, his pursuits ; it shall make him to speak, to look, to live, like the children of God. To the world, to angels, and to men, it shall appear that he bears the image of the heavenly Adam ; but if ever this holy image is made particularly visible, it is at the time when we walk closely with God, and live in the delightful

enjoyment of intercourse with heaven. O, what a lustre of piety does this shed over all that we do and say! O God! blessed are the men that habitually draw nigh unto thee! The men who are most with God have imparted to them, by their familiarity with their Maker, and the holy discoveries they enjoy, a general, a holy dignity in them; we behold the grace of God, the power of God, the image of God.

I will endeavor to illustrate what I mean, by one or two examples contained in the inspired records. When Moses had been with God on the mount of communion, he wist not that the skin of his face shone; but Aaron his brother, and all the children of Israel saw it, and the lustre was so great that he was obliged to put a veil upon his face, because they were dazzled with the sight; and I would inquire, What was this that rendered his appearance so glorious? What was that effulgence of glory and splendor, at which they were so astonished, and almost afraid? What was it? It was the image of the Lord from heaven. Stephen, you know, was once summoned before the Jewish council, to give an account of the doctrines he preached, of the holy doctrines which ever inspired his mind with the liveliest joy, and the persuasion of the importance of which ever quickened his zeal, and enabled him to suffer and die for Jesus: and while these Divine realities occupied his thoughts, and were the subject of his communication with those before whose tribunal he appeared, it is said, "All that sat in the council saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." It was the image of the heavenly Adam. By nothing else could such an effect have been produced; and we may be certain, that in one way or other, the same

image will, more or less, discover the reality of its existence in all them that believe.

3. This image shall be rendered more striking and glorious on the resurrection morning.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.” Such are the rational, the well-founded, the solid and certain hopes of the favorites of the second Adam. With eager anticipation and joyful hope, they look forward to the day when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised ; for then they are persuaded, that the image of the heavenly Adam will be far more conspicuous and glorious than it had been before, whether we regard their bodies or their souls. It will appear in our bodies ; for, “He shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.” These now frail and dying bodies shall then be formed upon the model of the glorified body of the Redeemer : and in holiness and purity our souls shall resemble our Lord’s, since they shall sin no more, but be entirely and forever freed from every corruption, purified from every moral stain, and constituted “holy and unblameable before him in love.” The image of the heavenly Adam will then gloriously appear in all the saints ; to his likeness they shall all be conformed ; his glory they shall all reflect ; they will then forever beautify and adorn the palace of our God. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” while their enemies will be obliged to say, We fools counted their lives to be madness, and their end to be without honor ;

but now how are they numbered with the just, and their portion is with the righteous.

It is as certain that believers shall thus bear the image of the heavenly Adam, as it is that all mankind bear the image of the earthly ; and this is the force of the apostle's reasoning : " As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." And to show that this is no foolish conjecture, nor absurd speculation, consider that this is the end of predestination, of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and of the afflictions with which believers are exercised, that they should bear this lovely image.

It is the end of their predestination. " For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren." Jehovah elected them for this express purpose, that they might resemble the Saviour ; he chose them in Christ, that they might be like unto Christ ; and by the sovereign purpose of his will he secured their real, evident, beautiful, and everlasting conformity to Christ, their living Head. These his all-wise designs, his excellent counsels, would not be fulfilled, if his servants did not bear the image of the heavenly.

So, also, this is the design of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The Bible was written and circulated that we all, " with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, might be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Our hearts are purified by the love of truth, and the written word ever directs us to the incarnate Word. The holy oracles of God are the means of sanctifying the souls of his servants, for his word directs them, and

when applied by his Spirit, enables them, to bear the image of the heavenly Adam.

Finally, 'This is the object to be promoted by all their afflictions. The apostle represents himself, and his fellow-laborers, as enduring a great fight of afflictions ; as tried, distressed, perplexed, and persecuted ; but, he adds, "always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body ;" and God is daily teaching his saints to glorify him in the fire. Often are the trying exercises of his servants the happy means of furthering their resemblance to Christ, and of promoting within them the life of faith upon him. When our imperfections and sins would render the possession of this blessed image doubtful to ourselves or to others, those afflictions are sent again to discover it, and to impart to it fresh lustre and excellence. When our afflictions have answered their designed end, we leave the chamber of sickness, or the scene of our sorrows, wherever it be, to evidence more strikingly our possession of the image of the heavenly Adam.

Permit me now, having finished the discussion of my subject, permit me to ask you, my hearers, Whose image and superscription do you bear ? I shall not ask you whether you bear the image of the earthly Adam, because I know it well ; for here "every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." But we wish you to be concerned to ascertain whether or not a new and Divine impression has been made upon your souls ? Are you, then, daily departing from all iniquity, hourly aspiring after conformity to Christ ? Some men carry the mark of the beast, and bear the image of the devil ; not only do they

show us their connexion with Adam, but their alliance with the powers of darkness. We speak this to their shame. O that they may be confounded before God, and led to pray that, instead of their being the very vassals of Satan, they may be numbered among the friends of Immanuel !

What thanks are due to the Redeemer, for the restoration which he hath made of peace and happiness to man !

My text shows us how the great Saviour has triumphed over human depravity and satanic force ; and how, by his own grace, he hath restored the image of God in his own soul, and directed our hopes to a better world, where this image shall be perfect, this resemblance inimitably correct. And has he indeed done all this ? then,

“ Praise ! flow forever, (if astonishment  
Will give thee leave,) my praise forever flow ;  
Praise ardent, cordial, constant, to high Heaven  
More fragrant, than Arabia sacrific'd,  
And all her spicy mountains in a flame.”

O Saviour ! stamp thine holy image upon our souls ; there let it appear ; there let it shine, in life, in death, and forever ! Amen.



## DISCOURSE XX.

*GOD'S GRACIOUS REGARD FOR THE PENITENT.*

PREACHED JULY 10, 1811.

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“He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.”

JOB XXXIII. 27, 28.

How desirable a thing is genuine penitence; it appears eminently so, from the attention God pays to it; from the salutary and holy feelings it calls into exercise; from the blessed effects which arise from it to the penitent individual, for “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy;” from the pleasure it occasions in heaven, for “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” All this you may see in the testimony of God, and in the experience of every true penitent. O, that you may see it in your own!

We will endeavor now to gain instruction upon this subject, from the passage I have read to you, a passage replete with consolation, and fraught with the richest truths. O, that while we meditate upon it, its goodness and suitableness to our case, its kind report of the mercy of the Lord Jehovah, may dissolve our hearts in thankfulness, and melt our eyes to tears! “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he

will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Observe here, how this text,

I. Presents to us the extent of the Divine inspection,—“He looketh upon men.”

II. Unfolds the language of genuine repentance,—“I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not.”

III. Discovers the triumphs of reigning grace,—“He shall deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.”

And all these things are closely connected together; for the truth of my text is, that God, in surveying the different ranks of men, beholds a penitent individual, hears his earnest cry, and forgives him the iniquity of his sin. We say, then, that our text,

I. Presents to us the extent of the Divine inspection.

“Jehovah looketh upon men.” God’s omniscience ought to make us adore and tremble; for He confines not his observation to the heavens, in which he more particularly dwells, but he also looketh upon men. Though he surveys the bright armies of saints and angels, who are ever before him, “hearkening to the voice of his word,” yet he also looketh upon men. Mortals are beheld by him. The inhabitants of the earth are looked upon as grasshoppers, yet not one escapes his notice. He watches over their actions, and there is no darkness, or shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from his eye.

The text teaches us that he looketh upon men universally, and at once, I say, he surveys men universally. He looks upon all the tribes and conditions of men, from the helpless babe to the hoary

sage ; he sees them all. Every one of the human race must exclaim, "Thou God seest me!" For "the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven ; his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men." "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me." Thus he does "from his throne behold all the dwellers upon earth;" and here the wise and the illiterate, the righteous and the wicked, the just and the unjust, meet together ; the Lord is the observer of them all. Also he surveys them at once. He looketh upon men, he sees them all at one glance, in one view ; his eyes behold all that is done upon the face of the earth, and the darkness and the light are both alike to him. At once the Lord looketh from heaven upon the children of men, "for the ways of man are always before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." The eyes of the Lord are at one moment in every place, beholding the evil and the good. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord ? Do not I fill heaven and the earth, saith the Lord ?" "All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Yet are there, amongst the numerous objects which engage his notice, some particular ones that attract his special

and marked attention ; while he sees all, some he observes with peculiar pleasure, as well as with the nicest inspection ; for " though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly ;" his name is holy, and he dwells on high, yet " to that man he looks, and with him he also dwells, that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word." For among all the tribes of men that pass before him, it is not the rich man, it is not the mighty man, it is not the self-righteous man, that attracts his notice ; but he that confesses his sins with a " humble, lowly, penitent and obedient heart." He sees, and he loves to see ; he hears, and he loves to hear, the man who says, " I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not."

Having attempted to illustrate the text, on the Divine inspection, let us now behold how it,

II. Unfolds the language of unfeigned repentance.

For here God fixes his eyes upon one who says, " I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not." The man who makes a confession like this, is far better in the sight of God, than he who says he has no sin, and thus deceives himself. The humbled publican shall go down to his house justified, rather than the vaunting pharisee. This is a confession which deserves attention ; it is one that will suit us all. It is a confession, an acknowledgment, 1st of having committed enormous crimes, " I have sinned ;" 2nd, of having abused the best of blessings, " I have perverted that which was right ;" 3rd, of having experienced disappointment from sinful pursuits, " and it profited me not." This is, I say,

1. A confession of having by sin offended against God. He says, " I have sinned," Like Job, a

penitent appears to say, "Behold, I am vile." "I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?" Like David to Nathan, he says, "I have sinned against the Lord." Like the prodigal, he cries, saying, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." I am "verily guilty concerning this thing." Wherever the Spirit of God has begun to work upon the soul, there will be this sense of unworthiness; this conviction of sin; this inward consciousness that all has not been right between God and the soul. "God be merciful unto me a sinner," is a cry which the great God knows well would suit us all. "I have sinned." Born in sin and shapen in iniquity, as I grew up to manhood, I gave awful proofs of the depravity of my nature. I neglected God and prayer; I secretly loved and cherished sin; I walked in the broad road that leadeth to destruction. There must be a measure of shame and confusion of face upon every one of us, when we approach a holy God; and the true penitent, feeling that it is of no use to attempt to conceal sin, because God looketh upon men, and knows it all; I say, being conscious of this, he confesses and forsakes his sin. He sees his guilt and shame, and casts himself upon the pure, free mercy of God in Christ.

2. This is a confession of having abused the best of blessings; "I have perverted that which was right." That is, thy holy providence gave me many peculiar and rich favors, which I employed to a bad purpose, or entirely neglected. A true penitent confesses that the goodness of God had not, till lately, led him to repentance. There are various right things, excellent blessings, which, in

the state of nature, we have perverted. Divine forbearance is a great good ; for, " it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed ;" and yet, perhaps I am addressing some, who, " because sentence against an evil work has not been executed speedily, have their hearts fully set in them to do evil."

This was perverting that which was right. The time of youth is a season of peculiar importance, and gives special advantages ; but how many a penitent has had to regret that he perverted it, wasted its precious hours, and his own strength, in the ways of folly and sin ; did not remember his Creator in the days of his youth, but passed them in carelessness, or perhaps in open depravity ! Health is a great blessing, but how little have we estimated it, how much have we perverted and abused it. Forgetting to be thankful for the favors we have received, we have not glorified the God " in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." Time is a great blessing, but how have we squandered it, idled it away in unnecessary visits, perhaps in unlawful amusements, or tried to kill time, while, in fact, time has been gradually killing us ! Providential supplies are great blessings ; but we have perverted them by luxury, by profaneness. The tables of the luxurious man cry out against him ; you may fancy that they groan under the weight of the abused creatures of God. The glutton, the wine-bibber, the man that is prodigal in any thing, perverts that which is in itself right. Money, property, possessions, are all right in themselves, but foolish man perverts them all. But O, a true penitent most of all regrets that he has abused the Bible, and the publication of the gospel. " The law of the Lord

is right, the commandment of the Lord is perfect and pure ;” yet, O, may a penitent say, how I abused it ! how I neglected its calls, its invitations, its promises ! How I refused to behold Christ crucified, to look unto the Saviour of sinners ! I perverted that which was right ; despising the book, the day, the people of God : so have I abused the best of blessings.

3. This is a confession of having experienced disappointment in the ways of sin. I have done all this, “and it profited me not.” Some men foolishly and wickedly say, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself in God ; but every penitent can truly testify, that “the way of transgressors is hard,” and that it ensures disappointment and dissatisfaction,—“it profiteth me not.” Now can I testify that it is all vanity and vexation of spirit. We may try the pursuit of gold, of fame, or of lawless pleasure ; but, “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ?” “For when ye were the servants of sin, what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ?” The sincere penitent confesses, that he was quite mistaken in the hope of happiness from the world ; that as yet he has not obtained it ; that all has been delusion and deceit ; that he has grasped at shadows, and thus proved his own folly and misery. “It profiteth me not.” O, sinner, if you never made this confession before, I am sure you will make it on a dying bed ; you will then see that the things which now please and amuse you, profit you not. O that you would now go and tell this to God before that solemn hour arrives ! Humbled for sin, confess the cheat the world has played on you ; it has profited you nothing.

III. My text discovers the triumph of reigning grace. "For if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "I have surely" says God, "heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned: for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall find mercy." This humble penitent, who sincerely makes the confession I have mentioned, and looks to the Redeemer, obtains grace in his sight; for the Lord, 1. Prevents his soul from enduring eternal perdition; 2. Raises him to the everlasting enjoyment of Divine illumination.

1. The Lord prevents his soul from enduring eternal perdition. "He will deliver his soul from going into the pit:" evidently implying, that to a pit of misery he was rapidly tending, and of falling into it was afraid. Perhaps he was saying, "Let not the water-floods overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me." Then God says, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." Jesus is a sufficient Saviour, I will accept him for his righteousness' sake. It may be, that there is here a reference to the grave, in allusion



to which, it is said in Scripture, "They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust." But does it not rather refer to that awful pit of destruction, mentioned in the 20th chapter of the Revelation, where Satan is bound, where sinners are lost?

"Behold," says a penitent, "for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Jesus, the Redeemer, then, delivers us from the wrath to come, saves from the power of death and hell; he prevents our souls from going into the pit, from whence there is no redemption. On us the second death hath no power.

2. The Almighty raises him to the perpetual enjoyment of Divine illumination. "And his life shall see the light." This implies the dispersion of his melancholy, the introduction of happiness and peace to his soul: for, through the grace of the great Ransom, Jesus, "the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." But further, this expression carries our thoughts to the period when we shall behold the light of heaven: for God intends to bring every believing penitent to that city of which it is written, that God and the Lamb are the light thereof. We, "who truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel," shall possess the inheritance of the saints in light, shall be forever illuminated and encircled by the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and so shall we be ever with the Lord. The Lord shall be our light, our God shall be our glory, and the days of our mourning shall be ended.

**Learn from the subject,—**

**The richness of God's pardoning mercy, extending even to sins of perverseness.**

**The madness of impenitent sinners : they must be banished to the pit, never to see the light.**

**The importance of imploring daily a penitential spirit : we sin daily, therefore beg always for mercy. Believe in the testimony of God, " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."**

# DISCOURSE XXI.

*GOD INSPECTS MORAL CHARACTER.*

PREACHED JULY 21, 1811.\*

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“All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” HEBREWS IV. 13.

WHERE should a creature look, but to his Creator? and what being should engage so much of our attention, as the God that made us? O my soul, forget, forget thy trifling cares; relinquish thy foolish chase after the world and sin, thy eagerness for the things of time and sense, and look upward to the Being who ever looks on thee.

Think on his perfections, adore him for his greatness, and tell of the glorious majesty of his kingdom. He, my hearers, who is God over all, blessed forever, requires us frequently to meditate on his ways; to consider in what relation we stand to him; to remember our own accountableness; and to think how holy and reverend is his name.

We will therefore now contemplate that Divine and holy Being, who made us, preserves us, and before whose bar we shall all shortly stand: we will remember, that to him all hearts are open, all desires known; and that his power no creature is able to control; “neither is there any creature

\* Fifteen days before his death.

that is not manifest in his sight ;” but, says the passage I have read for my text, “ All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Let us,—

I. Take that interesting view of Jehovah, with which the text presents us : He is the God with whom we have to do.

II. Glance at his penetrating omniscience as connected with such a view of him, “ All things are naked and open in his sight.”

III. Deduce some reflections from the subject.

I. Here you perceive the great God described, not so much by what he is in himself, as what he is to us : here you are allowed to indulge no idle speculation upon the nature of the Godhead, for you cannot by searching find him out, nor trace the Almighty to perfection ; but you have the awful relation in which you stand to him, strikingly set before you. We might speak of God, indeed, as happy in himself, as independent and self-existent, but we wish to excite you to prayer ; we want to urge you to adore and tremble ; and therefore, instead of answering your fancies, pleasing your ears, or entertaining your imaginations by discussing those perfections of the Deity, or those parts of his works, with which we are not so immediately concerned ; we shall rather lead you to view him as the God “ with whom we all have to do.” Yes, with this God, “ glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders,” we shall have some solemn transactions, transactions that will never be forgotten. Here I may address every one of my hearers, whether a lost sinner, or an heir of God through Christ and say, It is He with whom thou hast to do. O solemn thought ! Ye careless sinners, ye artful hypocrites, ye deluded votaries of

sensuality and uncleanness, ye unholy and profane, ye all have to do with God ; there is to be a commerce between your souls and the great Eternal. And ye blest saints, that love him too, have communications to carry on with heaven ; he is the God with whom you have to do, in the way of solemn dedication, habitual dependence, and lively hope that you shall be found accepted of him. He is, in deed and in truth, the God with whom we all have to do, especially on these memorable occasions—In the seasons of religious exercises—At the day of death—and, At the last judgment. In each of these times Jehovah is the God with whom we have to do. Let us look at our vast concerns with him—

1. In religious exercises. And thus we shall be able to ascertain the importance, and discover the solemnity of our engagements at the throne of grace, and in the house of God. Be it known unto you, men and brethren, then, that when we pray and sing, and attend public ordinances, we are carrying on commerce with Heaven ; we have to do with God. How ought the thought of creatures to be altogether banished from our minds, when we profess to worship ! for the place where we stand is holy ground. The worship in which we engage has Jehovah for its object, as well as its minute observer ; it is intercourse with Heaven. It is having to do with “the high and the lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.” It is bringing our powers and our services into his august and awful presence : it is dust and ashes speaking to the great Lord of the universe, and begging him not to be angry with us. Remember, ever remember, in all your acts of worship, the God with whom you have to do. Careless worshippers do not, will

not recollect that they are dealing with God ! but O, will they not be destroyed by his anger, and consumed by his fury, since they are offering the Lord strange fire, which he commanded them not ?

O that the great God we worship would himself convince us, and impress us with the truth, that we are, in every act of prayer and praise, dealing with "the King eternal, immortal, and invisible."

2. We have to do with God in the hour of death. To that solemn hour, every pulse we tell brings us nearer. The youngest may say, Soon this hand will cease to move, this throbbing heart be still. And O, as soon as we have drawn our last gasp, and uttered our last sigh, we shall have to do with God, in a way we never had before ! "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel : " thy God must be met, and terrible indeed will he appear to thee in that dread moment, unless thou hadst before had dealing with him, through Christ, as the God of salvation, the Hearer and Answerer of prayer ! Yes, we shall have to do with him ; for he is coming to stop the warm current of existence, and call us to himself : we shall have to do with him ; for yet a little while, and he will call our spirits to his bar, and take them kindly to himself, or assign them their lot with the wretched beings on whom his wrath is poured out for ever, without the least mixture of mercy. In the hour of death, let every soul solemnly recollect, he shall have to do with God ; may it be to say, "Into thine hands I commit my spirit." "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." May the exchange be this : for me to give him a spirit redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and renewed by the Spirit of God ; and for him to give me heaven and himself for my everlasting portion. Then I shall not regret, that in

death he will appear the God with whom I have to do. Once more, we shall particularly have to do with God—

3. At the last judgment. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” We shall then have to do with him : for he is coming in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, sitting upon the throne of his glory ; before him shall be gathered all nations : “for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Is there not a “day appointed in which the God with whom we have to do, will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he has ordained ?” Yes, he will in that day “judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” “Why then dost thou judge thy brother ? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother ? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.” “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So that every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” The dead, small and great, shall stand before God, the books shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books. We shall all have to do with God as our King, our Lawgiver, and our Judge : we shall all stand before him either pale, trembling, and in despair, or in all the ecstasy of holy joy. Each of us shall hear the voice, “Well done ;” or the sound, “Depart.” Thus shall we have to do with God at the last day.

II. Glance at his penetrating omniscience, as connected with such a view of him. For "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

All things are naked and open to his view. He beholds the whole universe, and every thing done in it. He knows all that passes in heaven, for there he displays his glory, and sees his servants ever before him, standing to hear his wisdom, or occupied in singing his praise. The dark abodes of despair, too, are inspected by him. Hell is naked before him, and destruction is without a covering. But his minute attention to individuals, is what I wish to enforce upon you now, that you may see how every mortal is immediately concerned in the omnipresence and omniscience of Jehovah; for "all things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

They are exposed to his view, they are marked by him. All the things we did in our infancy, in our youth, and all we are doing now. This shows us, I remark, by way of distinction and impression, that he is acquainted—with our state—our feelings—and our characters.

1. He knows well our state. It is naked and open before him. The God with whom we have to do, perceives accurately the circumstances of our condition. At once he knows, whether we are "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," or whether we have been "translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A hypocrite's heart always lies naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Christ's members and ministers may be deceived,



in the estimation they form of a man's personal religion, but God cannot be deceived. As he looks now upon this assembly, he knows, to the nicest certainty, who fears him, and who fears him not ; he recognises the men that have been in their closets in prayer to-day ; he sees the sincere worshipper, and distinguishes him from the cold formalist, and the pharisaical professor. The state of every one of us, as a child of God, or an heir of hell, is " naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

2. So also he knows and is privy to all our feelings. Those not excepted, which we foolishly think are locked up in our own hearts, and hidden from perception ; he knows them altogether. The secret desires any of you may entertain after sinful gratifications, and unhallowed pleasures, are all witnessed by him, and recorded in his book. Your desires to check conviction, to flee from remorse, to kill time, to obtain worldly honors ; all these " are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." All your hopes, whether well founded, or resting on false foundations, are known to God. All your attempts at self-deception, or to deceive others. Ah ! he knows them all. All your fears of dying, your dread of hell, these things are ever before him. The sensations of your mind, the feelings of your heart, which prompt you to the performance of the actions you accomplish, he detects, he sees even afar off. No wonder, then, that,

3. All our characters " are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." What we are at home, and what we are abroad, what we are in the closet, what we are in the family, what we are in the church, and what we

are in the world. The proportion of what is called virtue, and what is styled vice, that forms our character, is "all known by Him with whom we have to do;" and hence "there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from his view."

"Almighty God, thy piercing eye  
Strikes through the shades of night,  
And our most secret actions lie  
All open to thy sight.

"There's not a sin that we commit,  
Nor wicked word we say,  
But in thy dreadful book 'tis writ,  
Against the judgment-day."

"All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Let us,

III. Deduce from the subject some suitable reflections. And O! how this voice of God may be heard to urge us—

1. To evince holy reverence. A being, like Jehovah, privy to every thought, acquainted with all our ways, understanding even the secrets of our minds, should be looked up to and addressed with holy awe. His name is so holy and reverend, that when we approach him, we ought even to rejoice with trembling. O let us never dare trifle before him: let us entertain for him the highest sentiments of veneration: let us not even mention his name, but with the most solemn feelings of holy reverence; for we are not worthy even to take his name upon our polluted lips. He is in heaven, and we are upon earth; all things we do, and say, and think, are naked and open before him. Let us think on him, then, with all reverence and awe.

2. Learn hence to practise devout circumspection. Watch over your heart, and guard against

every sin, for God's eye is ever upon you. Were an intelligent, upright, and dignified fellow-creature always to inspect your actions, ever to attend you, to witness all your conduct by night and by day, would you not, O! would you not be, in every respect, a different character from what you are? And shall all this alteration of conduct be occasioned, by a fellow-creature's presence; and shall not the scrutiny of Omniscience alarm you? shall not the inspection of God lead you to consider your ways? O, set a watch upon every thought and deed, for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Let us learn,

3. To seek after internal sincerity. For O, what a disgusting spectacle must the heart of the hypocrite present to the God who "searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men!" O, if every thing is witnessed, known, and recorded by Him, how essentially desirable is it, that we should be upright characters; wearing no mask, assuming no characters which do not belong to us! How necessary that we should be Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile.

As God inspects us, O let him see that we wish to appear in our true light; that we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty; and now conduct ourselves with the carriage which simplicity and godly sincerity warrant and enjoin. O that we were but always sincere before God!

4. Learn to make perpetual approaches to the Lord Jesus Christ. For in him alone have you a shelter from the wrath of God, and a covert from the storm. "Hide me, O my Saviour, hide." The Lord Jesus Christ renders even the omniscience of God, a friend to sinners; for God be-

holds us in him, and accepts us for his sake. Nor need any one who believes in his name, and loves and serves him, at all fear, or be alarmed by the consideration, that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do;" for he knows the desires of them that fear him; he knows every act of worship, and approves them all. Interested in Christ, we can deal with a holy God, with satisfaction, profit, and joy. Escape for thy life then, sinner, flee to him: nor need you fear, though "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom you have to do."